

## The Parable of the Prodigal Son Part 2

### The Father

**Luke 15:17-24 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’” <sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

This portion of the story demands careful attention. I feel like I'm giving you a lot but cheating you at the same time because I can't get it all in. This is so rich and so deep.

Last week, we looked at the first character in the story, the younger son in verses 11-16.

#### 1. *The Shameless request,*

**Luke 15:11-12 (ESV)** The Parable of the Prodigal Son<sup>11</sup> And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.

We noted that in a culture where honoring your Father and Mother was paramount, this would have been an outrageous, shameless request. This request is tantamount to wishing your father dead, because it was customary for a son to receive his inheritance after the death of his father. His plans do not involve his Father, his Father's house, his Father's rules, or his Father's provisions. He wants out of all accountability and responsibility. However, the Father gave his portion; not because it was best for His son, but because the Father was willing to endure the pain of rejected love.

**2. The Shameless rebellion.** <sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

**Sin never works out the way it suggests.** We have this irreligious, rebellious, immoral sinner. This young man doesn't want the Father's presence, the Father's guidance, or the Father's love. He simply wants what he wants, and his sinfulness leads him to places he never thought he would go. Sin does that. His sin led him all the way to a far-off Gentile country, living an indulgent immoral lifestyle that left him in complete loneliness, homelessness, and helplessness. **Sin always costs more than we anticipate.** This Son had everything and now his foolishness leaves him with nothing. This son ends up in a Gentile town, not only taking care of pigs, but eating with pigs, becoming one of them. His sin has left him destitute and helpless.

Verse 17 we go from a *shameless request and a shameless rebellion to a.....*

### **3. The Shameful Repentance.**

**Luke 15:17 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’”

Take note of this! Repentance always begins with an honest, and accurate assessment of one's own sinful condition.

His assessment left him knowing he is incapable of getting himself out of his condition. He knows he is dying of hunger, and no one will give him anything. He comes to the end of himself. He realizes the toll his sin has taken and there's only one option. **He thinks on his father.** He thinks of the home and how many of his father's hired men have more than enough bread while he's dying of hunger.

**That says a lot about the father.** A hired man was a day laborer. The cheapest labor. They are at the lowest level worker; below the slave. They were unskilled, temporary help.

**He remembers that his father paid them more than enough.** *How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread?* What does this say about the Father? **The Father lived a life of generosity. He was generous to those who came to him in need.** His father was loving. His father was good. His father was kind. His father was generous.

His father is not a hard man. He's a merciful man, a generous man, and a forgiving man. **The son knows no one else like this other than his Father.**

There is no one else left to turn to. All he can do is humble himself, face his shame, admit his sin, go back, and try to be treated with the same kind of mercy and compassion and kindness that he knows his father treats poor people. And maybe, if he can work long enough, he can earn back what he lost, and make restitution back to the family.

**The son is thinking like the Pharisees and Scribes.** *This is one of Jesus' points.* They have in mind that God is harsh, distant, and demands restitution by hard labor. They have no sense of God's love, God's grace, and God's mercy toward a repentant sinner. In their mind, the only way to solve this is to work and earn back his reconciliation.

**Well, he's ready. He's broken. He's alone. He's sad. He's penitent, and (DON'T MISS THIS) HE IS ALSO TRUSTING HIS FATHER! This is a picture of one whose repentance leads to salvation.** He trusts in his father's goodness, compassion, generosity, and mercy. In spite of the horrible way he has dishonored his father, the terrible way he has lived his life, he knows his father is a forgiving man and trusts to go back and receive forgiveness and do whatever works he needs to do to make restitution and be reconciled.

**Luke 15:18-19 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son. (Here's the plan) *Treat me as one of your hired servants.*"

This is how repentance works. When a sinner comes to himself, he begins to assess where he is and where he's headed to the inevitable death and destruction and eternal damnation that is due him. The sinner says, "There is only one to whom I can turn and place my trust. That the Father, the one whom I have dishonored. I have to go back bearing my shame and full responsibility for my sin. I have to cast myself on His mercy, forgiveness, and love. And I have to tell Him that I'm willing to work to do whatever I need to do to earn my way back." Everybody would have understood that.

Look at his own self-indictment. "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. **This is true repentance!** He doesn't hold back anything, no excuses, no blame anywhere but himself. And so true penitence matched with true trust in a father's love and forgiveness starts the sinner back.

The Jews would have understood that when you come back, God will accept you if you do the work. This son had no rights, forfeited them all when he took his part of the estate and liquidated it, and squandered it, no rights, no worthiness.

There never will be a son again, at least that's his view. **Luke 15:18b-19 (ESV)** "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son. (Here's the plan) *Treat me as one of your hired servants.*" Just give me a job, and over all the years that it takes I'm going to work to earn back everything I lost. "I have no rights," he says. "I have no privileges. I lay no claim. I don't expect you to receive me on my terms."

Remember now, he's dead. They had a ceremony when he left, a funeral. That's why he's referred to twice by the father as "*my son who was dead.*"

The Pharisees and Scribes would have liked the idea that he came to his senses. They liked the idea that he's coming back. They would agree that there would be NO instant reconciliation. He must earn his way back. That's pure Pharisaic theology, along with every other religion in the world. He comes back and says, "I'll take my punishment. I'll take the exclusion from fellowship in the family. I'll take the distance from my father. I'll endure the humiliation of lowly work until I can be reconciled."

And so, **this shameful repentance leads to a shameful reception,**

#### **4. The shameful reception.**

In the minds of the Pharisees and Scribes, the father would not make himself available. He had been dishonored.

So the Jews would expect this reception: The father would refuse to meet him. The father would make him sit outside the gate of the home somewhere in that village for days in public view so that the whole village could heap scorn on him and bring the retribution upon his head that he deserved for the way he dishonored his father.

And the son would expect it. He knew it could come and he would sit there and take it. The Pharisees and scribes would expect that he had to be justifiably shamed.

And when the father did let him in after a certain period of time, it would be a very cool reception, and he would be required to bow low and kiss the father's feet. Then the father would tell him with a measure of indifference what works he would have to do and for how long he would have to do it in order to receive reconciliation.

**All the rabbis taught that repentance was work a man does to earn God's favor.**

They do not know God. They do not know His joy for the recovered sinner.

Jesus proves this once again in verse 20.

**Luke 15:20 (ESV)** <sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

"While he was still a long way off - " the son hadn't reached the entrance to the village when "His father saw him - " which is an indication of the father seeking, isn't it?

**God always initiates reconciliation.**

The father sees the son far off, is filled with compassion and His immediate response is to run! John MacArthur points out: **The Father wants to reach his son before his son reaches the village. The Father not only wants to initiate the reconciliation as the shepherd did when he found the sheep and the woman when she found the coin, but he wants not just to initiate the reconciliation – listen - he wants to get to his son before his son gets to the village. The Father wants to protect him from the shame. He wants to bear the shame, take the abuse, so this repentant son does not have to.**

Friends, this is the loving response of a Father toward a repentant child. He does not reject him. He is not cold to him. He does not wait for him to earn His love back. His love never left! **Instead, the father has compassion on him.**

The word "compassion" comes from a root that means "your intestines, or your bowel or your abdomen." He felt a sick feeling in his stomach when he saw the boy, and knew he was headed toward this unleashing of scorn. And so it says "he ran."

The word running here in the Greek is a technical word for racing in a stadium. **He sprinted is what he did.** He can't get there fast enough. Now I've got to tell you something, Middle Eastern noblemen don't run. Other people ran for them. It was a sign of weakness to run.

However, something dramatic is happening here. We have a repentant sinner coming back to God because they know there is nothing in their own effort that can restore any part of their lives. **Only a loving, compassionate, generous, willing Father can restore what's been lost. Can bring what is dead to life.**

The Father runs taking the shame, the scorn, the mockery, and the slander so that his son doesn't have to bear it. And when he finally gets there, even more shockingly, he embraced him, literally "fell on his neck," just collapsed in a massive hug, buried his head on the neck of his son, stinking and dirty and ragged as he was.

Everybody now knows how much that father loves that son. The Father takes his shame. He empties himself of any pride, of any rights, of any honor, and in a self-emptying display of love brings shame on himself in order to throw his arms around that returning sinner and protect him from being shamed by anyone else. **By the time the boy walked into the village, he was a fully reconciled son.**

I cannot tell you what shock would go through the listeners. You want to know how eager God is to receive a sinner? He will run through the dirt and bear the shame. He will embrace the forgiven sinner with all His strength and plants kisses all over the sinner's head.

**Some people think that God is a reluctant Savior. No, He's not.**

The Pharisees and Scribes would be shocked. What are they shocked by? What is missing in this transaction of grace? **Works.** That's the shock. **This son received the free gift of grace.**

**Luke 15:21 (ESV) <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'** End of speech!

But he left something out. What did he leave out? Go back to verse 19, he left out the last part, **"Make me as one of your hired men."** Why? Because there's no need for works. He's just received grace. The father is so eager to receive, and embrace, and reconcile with the son that the Father doesn't even let him finish the speech he had been reciting for days.

Full repentance, full faith, all grace, and no works. Why? **Because When repentance is real, the recovered sinner is immediately received, forgiven, and reconciled.**

The shameful reception demonstrates a shameful reconciliation.

### **5. The Shameful Reconciliation.**

**Luke 15:22 (ESV) <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.'**

And here again the eyes roll. The father has no shame. He did a shameful run, and now he shamelessly heaps blessing on this reconciled son. They wouldn't understand this at all. **He gives him three things:**

**The Robe.** Families in those days had a special robe only worn for special occasions. In fact, it says actually that in the Greek "the first ranking garment". This was the robe of the father. It is a self-emptying act by the father, clothing the son in his own glorious garment. **He is given the full identity of the father.**

**The Ring.** A ring was a signet ring, and it had on the ring the family crest or seal, so that when you stamped your ring into the melted wax on a document it was an authentication of that document, and it had authority. **He is given the full authority as family.**

**The Shoes.** Shoes were placed on his feet. Hired men went barefoot, and servants went barefoot and only masters and sons wore shoes, sandals. They understand what he's saying. **He is given the full honor of sonship.**

**Friends, the believer is richer beyond imagination. We inherit everything that heaven has as joint heirs with Christ, and we've earned none of it!**

**The Pharisees and Scribes are thinking, “No father would ever do that.”** They don't understand that God's honor comes in his loving grace and forgiveness. All they know about is His works and law.

The repentant sinner comes to the father stinking, clothed in filthy rags, unclean. He came with nothing to offer to remedy his own condition. Simply knowing his sinful condition and trusting the Father for forgiveness. That's how we all came cause God justifies the ungodly.

And this is precisely the kind of thing Jesus is doing with these sinners. This is the very thing the Pharisees and scribes refuse to see as the activity of God. But it is the work of God. It's the work of God to give everything He has to the penitent sinner immediately. There's no waiting period here. There's no test period. There's no limit on the privileges. This is full-blown sonship at the highest level.

What's the message here? God's grace triumphs over sin! God extends undeserved forgiveness, undeserved sonship, undeserved salvation, and undeserved honor to the repentant sinner without any restitution, without any works.

This kind of lavish love is a bizarre idea in a legalistic mind. They would have viewed this as a Shameful reconciliation. However, God doesn't stop there in redeeming what was lost.

## **6. The Shameful Rejoicing.**

**23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.**

The word “**fatten**,” is the English equivalent to the original Greek text for the word “corn” or “grain.” This is grain-fed veal. This is prime veal. And they kept that calf around for such a thing as the wedding or some monumental event which would call for a massive feast.

**This was it from the perspective of the Father!** Here we have the picture of heaven, rejoicing. Just one lost sinner comes home, and God puts on a mega feast.

Everybody comes joins the party. We saw this back in verse 6, when the sheep was brought home on the shoulders of the shepherd, he called his friends and neighbors and said, “**Rejoice with me, I found my sheep.**” And in verse 9, when the lady found the coin, she called her friends and neighbors, “**Rejoice with me, I found the coin.**” And the father when he found the son, “**Rejoice with me, I found my son.**”

This is not so much the celebration of the son. This is the celebration of the father. The feast honors the father. It honors the father for what he has done. It is the father who gave him back his life. It is the father who made him a son. It is the father who restored him to blessing by merciful forgiveness and gracious love. And the whole village comes to rejoice over his mercy and grace!

**Charles Spurgeon said, “The difference between mercy and grace? Mercy gave the Prodigal Son a second chance. Grace gave him a feast!”**

**The son entrusts his life to the father and the father entrusts his resources to the son.** The son is finally home. He's in the father's house. He's in the family. He has full access to all the riches of the father. And he joins with everyone in celebrating the greatness of this event, accept one and we'll look at him next week! Let us pray.