



SERMON REFLECTION GUIDE

Luke, Part 45: The Older Son - Luke 15:25-32 - September 28, 2025

SERMON OUTLINE

Intro - Good guys & bad guys, necessary for a story, but often the lines are blurrier than we originally thought. In the mind of the original reader, “**sinner** v. **Pharisee**” was a clear cut narrative, but Jesus’ parable of the two lost sons exposes that we all need a good Father.

1. The Older Brother

- His anger matches the “**grumbling**” of the Pharisees (v. 2). Jesus is drawing a clear parallel.
- He’s been working “in the field”, not wasting his life on selfish pleasure.
- He is immediately angry that even more of his Father’s estate (**his estate!**) is going towards a celebration for the wastrel.

2. "The “Servant”

- His statement to his father reveals how he truly views their relationship.
- He says “**I have served you**” & “**I never disobeyed your command**” - revealing that he sees his father less as a dad and more as a master, himself less as a son and more as a slave.
- He also exposes that he desires to “celebrate with his friends” - even his “**service**” to his father was in hopes of doing the same things that his younger brother was doing.

3. Sinners (Younger Sons) & Pharisees (Older Sons)

- The older brother’s vociferous speech to his father shows us how different and how similar the younger and older brother really are.
- They both want the spoils of the father’s estate without a relationship with the father.
- The “**sinner**” who rebels against God and the Bible and the church to enjoy life and freedom and self expression
- And the “**Pharisee**” who wants to use God and the Bible and the church to gain certain upper hands and recognition
- **We cannot show God’s grace to someone else if we do not think we need it ourselves.**
- **“The gospel is not a ‘help wanted’ sign, it is a ‘help available’ sign.” - John Piper**

4. The Father

- The father “**came out**” (v. 28)
 - The father makes the initial move towards both wayward sons, see also v. 20
- The father “**entreated** him” (v 28)
 - The verb “*parakaleo*” could literally be translated “**to call beside**”
- The father calls him “**Son**” (v. 31)
 - “*Teknon*” v. “*Huios*” - the father’s use of *teknon* reveals a lifetime of love.
- “**It was fitting** to celebrate” (v. 32)
 - “*Edei*” - necessary! When the dead live again, you have to celebrate!

5. The True & Better Older Brother

- There is a tension/cliffhanger at the end of the story: Will the older brother come in?
- The re-instatement of the younger brother will come at the cost to the older brother - will he be willing to pay it?
- Fortunately, we have a truer and better big brother - the **Lord Jesus Christ himself.**
- *He is the one* running towards us and embracing us and kissing us.
- *He is the one* stepping out onto the porch saying “come in with me”
- *He is the one* who FINDS the LOST and REVIVES the DEAD.



SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Why do we like to see the world as a collection of “good guys” and “bad guys”? Why is that often a faulty approach, especially in the church?
2. How is it clear that the younger son = “tax collectors and sinners” and the older son = “Pharisees and scribes” in Jesus’ parable?
3. How does the older son see his relationship to his father? How can we also be guilty of thinking we are simply “servants” of the Lord?
4. What is the difference in “self-discovery” and “moral performance”? How can the heart behind them be the same?
5. Discuss the statement: “We cannot show God’s grace to others if we do not think we need it ourselves.”
6. Which of the words of the father were most meaningful to you?
7. How is Jesus a better big brother than the one in the story?