

JESUS AND THE POWER OF PARABLES

Parable: A simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson. A comparison; specifically, a short fictitious narrative of something which might really occur in life or nature, by means of which a moral is drawn.

The parable of the “Prodigal Son”

Luke 15:11-24 “And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. 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. 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. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

“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! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ 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. 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.’ 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 bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.”

Prodigal: Rashly or wastefully extravagant. A prodigal nephew who squandered his inheritance. Giving or given in abundance; lavish or profuse: Given to extravagant expenditure; recklessly or viciously profuse; wasteful; not frugal or economical.

Luke 15:1-2 “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

Two Groups:

1. The outcast and marginalized
2. The religious self righteous



1. The outcast and marginalized

Luke 4:18-19 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

2. The religious self righteous

Luke 18:11-12 "The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'"

- ▶ It's obvious that the tax collectors and sinners are listening but He directs the parable at the Pharisees.

Introspection:

Question? Have you been in church for years, have you learned the Bible, quote scripture. Do you occasionally feel accomplished?

- ▶ There is a progression of the parables in Luke 15: a sheep, a coin, and then a son. With the sheep, he goes out and finds it, with the coin she sweeps the entire house until she finds it, but with the third, he doesn't go after the son, but lets him choose. Sheep can be carried, coins can be picked up but a son must choose. A son that is forced to love is not love at all.

Luke 15:11 "And he said, "There was a man who had two sons."

- ▶ We immediately see two different problems with the sons. We usually only consider the prodigal. But the parable actually tells of two kinds of lostness, two kinds of separation. What the son is asking for is unconscionable. And to make it even more poignant the father complies.

I. Things to note:

- A. According to Jewish culture the father could have disowned him.
- B. The Father allows him to go.
- C. No lecture
- D. No guilt
- E. Love would rather let you go, than to chain you in paradise.



- F. A far away country:
 - 1. Creates distance
 - 2. The illusion of freedom
 - 3. No accountability
 - 4. No restraint
 - 5. But eventually you hit the bottom

II. Comes to his senses:

- A. The bottom is a hard cruel teacher but very effective.
- B. He realizes his fathers servants are better off.
- C. He repents and returns.

Luke 15:18-20 "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father."

III. The Fathers response:

- A. No lecture, no guilt, no "I told you so".
- B. Kissed him.
- C. Ring.
- D. Robe.
- E. Sandals.
- F. Kill the fattened calf.
- G. Let's celebrate for my son was dead but now is alive.

Luke 15:25-29 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father,

'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"



The older son asks “What's going on”?

1. Your brother has come home.
2. Your father is throwing a party.
3. He is angry.
4. He refuses to go in.
5. The father pleads with him.
 - I have been slaving. Slaving, not serving. His experience was like a prison.
 - I never disobeyed your orders. Orders not wishes. Relationship was reduced to a transaction. I obey, you owe me. Not a father son but an employee boss.
 - He was so focused on earning what was already his.
 - He turned grace into a wage.
 - But when this son of yours. Not brother.
 - The text never mentions prostitutes. Uses hyperbole to magnify sin. Essentially looks more righteous.
 - The younger brother left home and ended up in slavery, the older brother stayed home and felt like a slave. Same result, different geography.
 - The older has lived in abundance yet feels cheated.
 - The older sees the inequality, you've been at it for years and yet the younger gets the recognition.
 - The older smiling on the outside but boiling on the inside.
 - The older brother fails to see the fathers generosity when in fact it was the sons inability to receive.

How many of us have:

1. Served out of obligation instead of love?
2. Have served out of fear instead of joy?
3. Have read the Bible, go to church, pray and do all the right things yet deep down we are keeping score?
4. Told God, I have done everything right? Where is my reward, I have been faithful yet you bless the other?

Juxtapose

Younger brother
His sin was obvious
Was messy
Knew he ended up with pigs

Older brother
His sin was hidden
Was neat, orderly
Had no idea he was in with



The Fathers response:

1. You have always been with me.
 2. Everything I have is yours.
 3. Referred to him as son, even after he had been accused of favoritism, refusing to enter the party, publicly humiliating the father.
 4. The father is gentle, assuring him he is always with him.
 5. In his eyes the celebration is totally appropriate.
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- ▶ If you cannot celebrate the fact that the lost one has been found then you truly do not know the meaning of being found!
 - ▶ The ending is not in the parable, it's in the room. Jesus is speaking directly to the Pharisees.

The issue is grace:

- A self righteous mindset doesn't have a paradigm for grace.
- In all your righteous acts your told you need the same salvation.
- Is under the mindset that the brother may come back but only as a savant. The Father saw him as a son.
- Now he is sitting at the same table wearing the same robe, the same ring, the same sandals, loved with the same love.

Matthew 20:1-16 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, 'You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, 'Why do you stand here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You go into the vineyard too.' And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.'

And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I



am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ So the last will be first, and the first last.”

Philippians 3:1-17 “Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.”

