

CS – Biblical Pattern of Repentance

10/29/23

Luke 15:11-32

Sunday AM

A dairy farmer in need of a new truck saw an online ad about a sale on trucks at the local car dealership. After finding what he liked, he started to write a check until the salesman said, “Wait, I haven’t given you the final price yet.” The farmer replied, “But I saw the price advertised online.” The salesman said, “Oh, that’s for the basic model – all of the options cost extra.” After haggling over the price, he paid for the truck and drove off. A few weeks later, the salesman called the farmer b/c he needed a cow for his son’s 4-H project. The farmer assured him that he had several cows for sale for \$500. So, the salesman drove out and selected a cow, but when he took out his checkbook, the farmer said, “Wait. I haven’t given you the final price.” He then handed the salesman a bill that read:

BASIC COW	\$ 500.00
Two-tone Exterior	\$ 125.00
Extra Stomach	\$ 75.00
Four Handy Spigots @ \$25 each	\$ 100.00
Leather upholstery	\$ 200.00
Dual Horns	\$ 50.00
<u>Automatic Rear Fly Swatter</u>	<u>\$ 65.00</u>
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,115.00

POINT – whether buying cars or cows – it’s essential to always know the *bottom line*. What is the true cost?

When it comes to following Jesus, if we really knew the real cost, most people would have *sticker shock*. Sadly, by all appearances, too many people are only interested in the basic model of Christianity where they get just enough Jesus to keep them out of hell w/out having Him cram their style fun. I find this especially true as it pertains to repentance.

When we’ve blown it, and want/need forgiveness, we don’t always want to do what’s required to have it. This is a key lesson in the Prodigal Son parable.

Jesus said: “There was a man who had (2) sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So, the father divided his property b/w them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had and set off for a distant country where he squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that country, and he began to be in need. So, he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach w/ the pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ So, he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled w/ compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us have a feast to celebrate – for my son who was dead is alive again; he was lost and now is found.’ So, they began to celebrate. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So, he called one of the servants and asked what was going on. He said, ‘Your brother has come home, and your father has killed the fattened calf b/c he has him back safe and sound.’ The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded w/ him. But he said, “Look! All these years I have been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate w/ my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property w/ prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!” The father

said, 'My son, you are always w/ me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, b/c this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Luke 15 is the **chapter on lost things**. In it, we find (3) parables where Jesus discusses (4) things that'd been lost – the **lost sheep**, a **lost coin**, and (2) **lost sons**.

Yes – (2) lost sons. The one who left home and the one who stayed home. We often miss the elder brother who was like the lost coin that was lost in the house.

What's interesting to me is that of the (4) things Jesus said were lost, it was the older brother (Pharisees) that when these parables had concluded, **was the only one who remained lost**. But that's another sermon for another time! Today, I want to spend a few min. on the younger son and the Biblical pattern of repentance.

To fully appreciate this story, we need to consider the audience, back in vs. 1, we find that Jesus was talking w/ a group of tax collectors when the Pharisees interrupted. These (2) groups were like oil/water w/ no love lost b/w them. The tax collectors were considered the worst of sinners b/c they'd prostituted themselves to Caesar to extract taxes for the infidel Romans, while the Pharisees were the smug, self-righteous religious leaders who thought of themselves as better than the rest b/c of their convictions and adherence to the rules. And in this parable, Jesus addresses both groups.

The Father represents God and the sons represent the **rebellious** lost and the **religious** lost. The rebellious lost (tax collectors) are people who live indifferent to God, while the religious lost (Pharisees) are those who live close to the truth but far from intimacy – yet both are lost. Both were equally far from the Father in different ways, yet equally in need of **repentance** and **forgiveness** to be reconciled w/ the Father.

WTM – what comes to mind when you hear the terms **forgiveness** and **repentance**?

forgiveness (*aphesis*) to pardon/release from a penalty or to liberate someone from what binds/confines them.

It refers to the sending away of our trespasses/sins found in the O.T. ritual carried out on the Day of Atonement when the high priest sent the scapegoat into the wilderness (see Leviticus 16). The HP would sacrifice one goat and sprinkle its blood over the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, then, he'd confess Israel's sins over the live goat – and release this goat in the wilderness at the top of the Mt. of Olives as a gesture of God taking away the sins of the people.

In this picture, we learn that forgiveness is never something that can be earned thru personal effort or goodness, but it's something that's imputed to us as a gift from God thru an act of His mercy/grace.

Paul explained this idea in Ephesians 2:8-9 when he said that forgiveness is a gift of mercy that's neither owed nor earned but only be received by faith.

For by grace, you have been saved thru faith – this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Meaning – forgiveness is the result of us receiving by faith the initiative of God's unmerited grace/mercy.

Don't Miss – we're not saved by faith in anything, but by faith in the unmerited act of Jesus bearing our sins on the cross and laying down His life to give life. In return, when we place our faith in His grace based on the finished work of Christ on the cross, God saves us! Not b/c of the righteous things we have done, but b/c of His mercy we're forgiven and reconciled to God.

In Christ (and Christ alone), we have redemption thru His blood the forgiveness of sin. Ephesians 1:7

repentance (*metanoia*) to have a change of direction, mindset, heart, attitude, and interest. *It's the step-by-step process we go thru to turn away from sin to God.*

Let me explain this truth thru the story of the first son.

DECISION 1 – **RESPOND** or **REBEL**

The parable begins w/ a sad exchange as the rebellious son asks his living dad for his inheritance – which is tantamount to wishing his father was dead. Then proceeded to squander his blessing on wild living against the will/hope of the father – all b/c he thought he knew better than the father and preferred his will over his father's will. **Sound familiar?**

SIDE – be careful what you ask for b/c sometimes God might just give you what you ask for even though it's not His heart/will for you – just to teach you a lesson!

I believe this illustrates our will to please ourselves each day as we face numerous moments of decision – *spiritual forks in the road* – that require us to decide whether we're going to respond to God or rebel from His will/way to a way that seems right to ourselves.

In this story, after selling out to the world for a moment of personal gratification, this rebellious son found himself ruined in a pig sty bankrupt/bewildered. He learned the hard way that *sin always takes you farther than you want to go, keeps you longer than you want to stay, and costs you more than you're willing to pay.*

WHY? It's b/c like the *law of gravity*, no one can defy the *law of sin/death* – we all will reap what we sow and the wages of sin is always a dead-end unto death.

DECISION 2 – **REALIZE** or **RATIONALIZE**

Now, like the prodigal, we're all faced w/ a 2nd decision. We can **realize**/own our circumstances or we can attempt to **rationalize** them away – but we cannot escape the consequences.

So, like the prodigal, we can *come to our senses* and admit to ourselves we've blown it, or we can attempt to explain away our circumstances/decisions and wallow in our own pity. The idea that he *came to his senses* means **he came to the end of himself, which led him to discover the beginning of God.**

DON'T MISS – When we blow it (and we will) and find ourselves ruined by sin (and we will) – b/c of Jesus, all is not lost. We still have a choice. We can realize the situation and find hope in the midst of what might appear hopeless or we can't **rationalize** it away.

This leads us to the 3rd decision or fork in the road of faith – what do we do when we *come to our senses*?

DECISION 3 – **REPENT** or **REJECT**

Here's the deal, *repentance* is more than coming to your senses when you've hit rock bottom – *it's putting into motion a plan of action*. It's deciding to either run **TO** God or run **FROM** God – to *repent* or to *reject*.

In the story, the son devised a plan and got up to put the plan into motion. **He REPENTED!** He resisted the guilt/shame. He swallowed his pride. He got over the embarrassment – and he turned his heart toward home.

Truth – Repentance is more than an idea; it's an action.

The beauty of this story is like w/ us, the father was waiting/watching for the son's return. He wasn't waiting to zap him or tell him "I told you so!" Nor was he basking in the son's demise or holding a grudge – he was eager for reconciliation/restoration – wanting and waiting to bless his son, not blow him off.

And this is where the rubber hits the road when it comes to repentance – and where too many people attempt to forgo the required steps of true repentance.

DECISION 4 – **RESTITUTION** or **REFUSAL**

Whereas *repentance* is getting things right w/ God – turning from sin to Jesus – *restitution* is making things right w/ those whom your sin has affected/infected.

In his statement – *I have sinned against heaven (God) and against you*, he was saying that his actions were first and foremost in rebellion to God, but also, that his actions impacted/affected his father too – and for that, he was truly sorry for any pain/hurt that he caused.

True Biblical repentance is more than getting right *vertically*, it's also making things right *horizontally*. It's seeking to clear the air and make things right w/ to those impacted by our sinful actions. It's humbly and sincerely looking people in the face to own your mistakes to genuinely seek to right the relationship.

Unlike the time when I was 8 and my neighbor brought her daughter to my house, knocked on the door, and demanded of my mom that I apologize for saying something smart and pushing her daughter b/c she was being a brat. My mother brought me to the door and told me to say "I'm sorry." I looked at the girl and said, "Ok... you're sorry!" and I turned and walked away.

True repentance requires a willingness to genuinely admit your error and ask for others to forgive you.

But there's one more crucial step that CANNOT be circumvented in true biblical repentance.

DECISION 5 – **RETRIBUTION** or **REBUTTAL**

Seeking to right one's wrongs is more than saying, "I'm sorry". It requires having a willingness to face the consequences to right the wrong.

LISTEN – if there's an unwillingness to make things right w/ the people your sin has impacted, then that's a sure sign that you're not truly repentant.

We see this in the parable as the son was willing to be disowned and treated like a servant – *I'm not worthy to be called your son, but can I be a hired servant?*

This is huge. NO! No one wants to face the music of their mistakes, but to have a chance at reconciliation, the repentant must show a willingness to make restitution and face the consequences for their actions.

Truth – it's not the perpetrator who determines the penalty, but the offended/wounded who decide the punishment. The guilty can only hope for mercy/grace – anything else prevents reconciliation/restoration.

SIDE – as the person guilty of committing acts of omission/commission – while people may be reluctant to forgive – God is NOT! His grace/mercy never fails and always prevails for the genuinely repentant – and He always knows the sincerity of the heart.

SECOND – I'm not responsible for how a person responds to my sincere desire to make things right – I'm responsible for genuinely seeking it. And whether or not reconciliation takes place – God releases us from the owed debt whether others do or not.

RESULT – RESTORATION and RENEWAL

Reconciliation/renewal can be experienced by anyone who's truly repentant and willing to walk step-by-step thru the complete process of Biblical repentance.

This is seen in the father's response to kill the fattened calf, put a robe/shoes on his son, and the family ring on his finger. His relationship was fully healed and restored b/c the father saw the son's repentance.

This is true of us too. True repentance that depends on the cross for forgiveness and doesn't attempt to short-circuit the process, more often than not finds release, reconciliation, renewal, and restoration.

Let us go to the cross to learn how we may be forgiven, and then let us linger there so that we might learn how to forgive. Unknown

A boy and his sister were visiting their grandparents where he was given his 1st slingshot. He practiced daily, but could never hit his target. One day in the backyard, he spied Granma's pet duck. On impulse, he took aim and let it fly – hitting his target. The boy panicked and hid the dead duck in the woodpile, only to notice his sister saw him. After lunch, Grandma said, "Sally, let's wash the dishes." But Sally said, "Johnny told me he wanted to clean the kitchen. Didn't you, Johnny?" She whispered, "Remember the duck!" So, Johnny did the dishes. Later Grandpa asked if they wanted to go fishing, but Grandma said she needed Sally to help make supper. Sally said, "That's ok, b/c Johnny wants to do it." She whispered, "Remember the duck." So, Johnny stayed while Sally went fishing. After several days of Johnny doing his/Sally's chores, he couldn't stand it any longer. So, he confessed to Grandma that he'd killed her duck. She said, "I know, Johnny. I was standing at the window – and b/c I love you, I've already forgiven you! I just wondered how long you were going to let Sally make you her slave."

Are you tired of being a slave to unforgiveness? Stop trying to short-circuit the process of repentance. Realize what your rebellion has cost you. Come to your senses and get up and return to the Father who's waiting. Confess your sin, and allow God who's faithful and just to forgive sin, to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. And make it right w/ those your sin has impacted so that your vertical and horizontal relationships can be reconciled, restored, and renewed.