



Prodigal Father
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June 20, 2021

The Crossing Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

This week we are concluding our series called “Prodigal.” It is a parable about the love of a father as we honor the fathers in our lives – and glorify our Heavenly Father.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 15:19-20, 28-32 “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 with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, “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 with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!” “My son” the father said, “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.”

OBSERVATION

We are concluding our series on the Prodigal, but actually we should view it as a parable about three Prodigals: the son, the older brother and the father. To call the father a prodigal seems strange because he never left home, but that’s not what the word prodigal means: The first dictionary definition of the word “prodigal” is spending money or resources freely or recklessly; wastefully extravagant. The second definition is having or giving something on a lavish scale. The most extravagant one in our parable is the father. He threw the banquet of a lifetime for his returning son. The love of this father is both lavish and reckless just as Jesus describes our Father as having reckless, lavish love for us.

QUESTION: In what ways is God reckless and lavish in His relationship with you?

Scripture says that the father in this parable saw his son returning and was filled with _____. Some of us would fill in that blank with “disgust” or “anger” or “embarrassment” or “apathy” or “indifference”, right? Our scripture verse uses the word “compassion” because, even though he was humiliated, he desired a relationship with his son. He ran to him although a Middle-Eastern man never ran; he was a man of dignity and authority and always walked in a dignified way. To run would bring shame, humiliation and embarrassment upon him. But this father ran in order

to reach his son before the people of the village could get to him. They meant to cut the son off from the community in order to restore the father's dignity. Jesus is creating an image of God who breaks all boundaries to get to us. This parable is all about the heart of our loving Heavenly Father. If the relationship is to be fixed, the father has to fix it. The son can't work his way back – he can't do enough good works to get back. It will take the father's grace.

QUESTION: What would it cost you to show that kind of reckless love to someone far from God?

APPLICATION

We all have vivid memories of our dads – both positive and negative - and they impact our view of God. Some of us have a good relationship with our dads and so it is easy to see the love of our Heavenly Father. For others of us, we have a strained relationship and this also impacts our perspective of God. We know in our hearts that God is good, but we think we can never please Him or ever be good enough. Jesus knew this and, in His most famous parable, He used the father to totally turn the image upside down to indicate the love of God for us.

QUESTION: What image of God did your father represent for you?

This is about a broken relationship. Our relationship with God was broken because of sin and we don't have the power to reconcile it – only our Father can fix it. God is not like an earthly father with a self-righteous son who humiliates him by running away or another son who humiliates him by refusing to come to the banquet. It's not enough to NOT be the Prodigal; it's not enough to NOT be the older brother. Our faith is determined by how much we look like the Father.

QUESTION: What cost are you willing to pay to become like the Father?

QUESTION: If your relationship with your father is broken, what are you doing to help repair it?

QUESTION: Where are you in your relationship with God?

Do you know what spiritual maturity is? Until we can celebrate and be glad when people who are far from God come to Him, we won't be like the father. Sometimes it's going to those who have been in a distant land and sometimes it's going to those who are self-righteous. Jesus met people where they were: Zacchaeus the thief, the woman at the well, Thomas who doubted, the unclean woman who touched Jesus and was healed. We are to follow His example of how to love others. How do we start? When it comes to sharing our faith, we get so intimidated because we don't know enough about the Bible and we're afraid to look like hypocrites. But we only have to share our story: 1) Who were you before you met Christ? 2) What caused you to commit your life to Him? and 3) What has your life looked like since Jesus?

QUESTION: Who do you need to invest in? Who do you need to show grace to? Who are you praying for?

If we want to know the length our Heavenly Father went to rescue us, we need to turn to Jesus. God sent His one and only Son to die on a cross for us. He walked on this earth and knew grief, loss, hardship and struggles. He willingly laid down His life on the cross so we could be forgiven and reconciled to our Father. That is the extent to which the Father went to find us and save us. Now, His will for our lives is that we become like the prodigal's father and His Son Jesus.

QUESTION: If you are a father what are you learning about yourself from that experience?

QUESTION: What is your definition of success in your family?

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, we thank You for blessing us with the fathers who dedicated themselves to raising us in the knowledge of Your Kingdom. For those of us who experienced difficulties in our relationships with our dads, help us to erase those memories with grace and forgiveness. Regardless of which experience we individually remember, we know the You are the Father who embraces, protects, and heals us. In Jesus' name. Amen

QUESTIONS

QUESTION: In what ways is God reckless and lavish in His relationship with you?

QUESTION: What would it cost you to show that kind of reckless love to someone far from God?

QUESTION: What image of God did your father portray for you?

QUESTION: What cost are you willing to pay to become like the Father?

QUESTION: If your relationship with your father is broken, what are you doing to help repair it?

QUESTION: Where are you in your relationship with God?

QUESTION: Who do you need to invest in? Who do you need to show grace to? Who are you praying for?

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