

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
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Series: Far from the Father  
May 23, 2021

Sins of the Pharisee  
Luke 15: 22-32

**“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 and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and 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 him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’**

**“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.’”**

Good morning, Harris Creek! It is good to be with you guys. I have told you before that I love the beach. Any beach people? You guys love the beach? Wish you were at the beach right now? You have got friends at the beach, and you are mad at them because they are there, and you are not? We grew up going to the beach. Loved going to the beach when I was little. That is where we would vacation, at Port Aransas, which is kind of like the beach. So, we would go there. And some of you are like, “I like to go to the beach, but I don’t get in the water.” Any of those? Any of those guys here? You are like, “I love going to the beach, but there’s creatures in the water.” I get it. That is not me, though. I love to go out there. So, even when I was little, I would get the raft or a surfboard, and just go out past where you could touch. And I would get the goggles and snorkel and do all that kind of stuff. And just kind of bob in the waves. So that was it for me. That represents vacation growing up for me.

So, I can remember one time, going with a friend of mine. And we go there, I am probably about 8 years old, and so Mom sets up shop. She has got the umbrella on the beach and the towel. And you have to have a “base” - Mom would say, “This is base. Hey, you guys, stay where I can see you.” And then we go out there, we have got our goggles, we go beyond where we can touch. So,

we are snorkeling around, you know, looking for fish. Which you are not going to see fish, like unless it kissed you on the face. Because, let us be honest, this is opaque - it is dark. It is kind of like swimming in mud, but that is what we are doing. And we are just having a big time, and like, time goes by. We are out there, lots of time goes by, having fun. You know, just get tired. Tired of treading water. Tired of swimming. It is time to go in. And so, we go back to the shore, and my mom had left. And that was really confusing to me. I am like, where did she go? Was there an emergency? You know, and I start looking for her, and she is not anywhere. Like, she had packed up all of the stuff. She was not there. And I look where she parked the car, it was not there. And I begin to panic a little bit. And I am like, why would Mom make such a big deal to stay where we could see her, and now she is just gone. And I start looking around, and I realize the hotel that was right there behind her had moved also. And I am like, wow! Then I am putting it all together, and I realized we had drifted about a half mile down the shore. We were out there, and I did not know we were drifting. I did not know we were moving away from her, slowly. But all of a sudden, I came to the realization that she was not there. And it was not her fault; I had moved.

And some of you are here this morning, and you have been drifting from God. You had that experience. You can remember that “camp high”. You remember crying during worship. That worship leader hit that note, all the feels, the Spirit was there. One time you felt close. You experienced God. I do not know how you did it, but at some point, it was like: God is real. I will do what He says. I will go where He says. I want to be His, and I am not playing games. I actually believe there is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and I am going to die, and I am going to be with Him forever. And I just want to experience Him. Even at an emotional level, I want to feel Him. And maybe you have, at different times. But you are here this morning, and you have been drifting. And the scariest part about drifting is you do not know you are drifting. Like, when I was out there and we went back to the shore, I did not know that I had drifted. That is why I thought she had moved, because I did not feel like we were going a half a mile down the shore. It still felt like we were swimming in the same place. And you have been going to the same church services. You have been doing the same quiet time. You have been reading the same devotional for years, and you do not realize that your heart is drifting. And it is not a ‘cute’ thing. It’s not a “Oh, that’s sweet. I’ve just need to swim back.” It is a dangerous thing.

It is what I want to talk about this morning - the slow, exhausting drift of the Pharisee. The Pharisees were this religious sect. They were the A Team. They were the people. They had memorized the Torah. They had done all the things. They were the Type A, rule-followers, checked all the boxes, they got it together. And Jesus was the most hostile to the Pharisees. If you look at His ministry He sat with the sinners, He sat with the prostitutes, He hung out with the tax collectors. But when He talks to the Pharisees, He takes a different tone. **“You brood of vipers! You whitewashed tombs! You make people twice the sons of hell that you were!”** It is a finger-in-your-chest kind of message.

If you read Matthew 23, there is lots of exclamation points. Right? Turning over tables. He takes a different tone with the Pharisees. But today, you are going to see kind of an exception. He has a tender word for them. He has a kind admonishment for us. But, as I said, the danger is you do not know if you are drifting. Honestly, I cannot tell you how to know if you are drifting. I can, this

morning and I will, show you if you have drifted. If you have drifted. If you have found yourself in a place where you look up, and God seems far.

And so, I will ask you some questions up front, just to kind of maybe open your heart to the message. See if, hey, God might have something for you:

- Do you find yourself short-tempered at the way things turn out? Like, you are frustrated by outcomes.
- Do you find yourself frustrated when things are not done your way? “No, that’s not the right way to do it! Why doesn’t everybody listen to me? Like, why don’t they do it this way? Don’t they understand I’ve been doing this for a while?”
- Do you find it difficult to celebrate the success of others? Instead, you wonder, “Why not me? When am I going to get the promotion? When am I going to get married? When am I going to have kids? Always the bridesmaid, never the bride. Why not me? Are you not seeing my faithfulness down here? Good for them.”

And how about this one? It is a big one. In fact, I want you to answer this one, make sure you have got a good, solid answer to this one. And if the answer is, “No”, just settle in that no right now. “Okay, you know what, I’m coming to the realization that at this moment, the answer is no, and be honest about it.”

- Do you enjoy God? Okay? It is a big question. It is a very important question. Do you find joy in your relationship with God? Or does it feel like more work and obedience? Following the rules. “I’ll do what I’ve got to do! It’s fine!”

So last week we looked at the younger brother. We are in this series, that’s two weeks, on a chapter affectionately called The Prodigal Son. It is Luke 15. But we talked about last week why it should not really be called The Prodigal Son, that that title was added later. It is really a prodigal father. It is the father who was reckless with his grace and lavish forgiveness and threw the party for the son who had sinned. And we talked about his rebellion, and we looked at how a father restores the rebellious when they repent. That when you come and you turn around to God, like He is right there. And that is true for the Pharisee also, for the self-righteous, for the one who looks at God out of obligation. When you repent, when you turn, when you say, “God, I want to stir my affections for you, I want to feel things for you, I want to love you. You repent and He is there. He is ready to take you back.

And that is what we are going to talk about today in this series. We call this series Far from the Father. We are going to talk about the sins of the Pharisee, who is drifted far from the Father. Because, if you were like last week, and you were like, “You know what? He is talking about getting drunk, that kind of rebellion, waking up with the pigs. I never really struggled with alcohol.” But maybe for you, it is anger. And we know that the younger brother spent all of his dad’s money on prostitutes. And you are like, “Prostitutes ... not my thing. I don’t even struggle with pornography.” Maybe for you, it is pride. “And you know what? I am not entertained, like those sinners are. I do not watch the things they watch. I do not go to the places they go to. I don’t listen to the things that they listen to.” Maybe for you, it is envy. Maybe that is your thing. And here is the thing. Here is the kicker. If in any way you think those sins are lesser, you are wrong. The Bible says you are wrong. The Scriptures, that you have submitted your life to, say

you are wrong. And if at any part right now, you are arguing with me, the message is for you. Okay? Like, I am glad you are here. God, in His sovereignty, He has you here. You have drifted. That is up front. You have drifted. And I have got a word for you, from the Scripture today, Luke 15. The sins of the Pharisee who has drifted far from the Father.

Jesus is going to take the Pharisees ... Remember what is happening? He is telling the story; the most famous story Jesus has ever told. We call it a parable, a story to illustrate a point. And He is going to tell this story in response to something that the Pharisees said. Do you remember what they said? They said, **“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them. He hangs out with sinners.”** And we talked about how sinners was a classification of people. Those who were prostitutes, tax collectors, or something was wrong with them, and people thought that was because of their sins. They were on the outskirts of society, and it is the people that Jesus moved toward. The marginalized. And the religious leaders saying, **“He welcomes sinners and eats with them.”** And Jesus says, “Hey, let me tell you a story about how my Daddy, how my Father in heaven, treats sinners.” And He does this brilliant thing. He takes them, and He places them in the story. So right now, they have heard of the younger brother, squandering his dad’s money on prostitutes, and they are outraged. And the father welcomed him back and threw his arms around him and kissed his neck, and they are like, “How could he do that?” And Jesus takes them, and He places them in the story. It is a brilliant move. If you have been in church long, you might have heard of the prophet, Nathan. And you might have heard how he handled David when David slept with Bathsheba and had Uriah, her husband, killed. Nathan shows up to David and says, “There was a king, and the king had hundreds of sheep and hundreds of lambs, but what he did is he took this one lamb from this poor peasant and had him killed.” And David said, “Who was this man? I’ll have him killed!” And Nathan said, “You are that man.” And he places him in the story. That is what Jesus just did with the Pharisees. He took them and He puts them in the story.

The sins of the Pharisee - I will give them to you up front so you can look for them: anger, pride, and envy. Anger, pride, and envy. So, the younger brother repents, says, “Dad, I’ve sinned against heaven and against you.” But the dad cuts him off right there in verse 22. **“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 and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So, they began to celebrate.”** There is a party and then it says ‘meanwhile’. And this ‘meanwhile’ that is a scene change. A scene changes. Now we are moving outside the party because that is where the other brother is. He is out there in the field, being faithful, doing all the things that he is supposed to be doing.

**“Meanwhile, (verse 25) 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 him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ “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.’**” And it seems like there should be about twelve more verses, but it is the end. End of story. Curtain closes. Older brother is outside the party. He does not get in the party.

I am telling you, these sins of anger, and pride, and envy, entitlement, self-righteousness ... the “respectable” sins ... they will drag you away, just like anything else. And I am not preaching hellfire and brimstone, that is not my heart. I am preaching to you from the Word of God that these sins are dangerous, and they happen slowly. And you wake up one day and God is far, and you have been doing everything you thought you were supposed to be doing. And so here, just to summarize, he is in the field. He is doing what he is supposed to be doing. He comes in and he is outraged, and he pouts outside the party. And you think the dad, because dads how would we respond to this, you have seen this: (gritting teeth) “Boy, you’d better get inside there.” You know, when you talk, but your teeth do not move. “You’d better get in there! Hey! What are you doing out here? Get inside!” But that is not what the father does. It says he goes out to him, and he pleads with him, and he has a tender word for him. He’s like, “Bud, man, your brother’s ... Remember, you thought he was dead. We had dinner a few weeks ago and we talked about how he is probably dead, and he is not dead! This is great news! He’s not dead!” But he is like, “Yeah, Dad, but you killed a calf? That is my calf! You did not even give me a goat, man! I’ve been here with you this whole time.” And he focuses on what the father has not done. “This is what you have not done, Dad!” Not all the things he has done. Not the ways he has provided for him. Then he says, “This son of yours ...” And his dad says, “No, no, no, Bud. This brother of yours.”

I do not know where you are at with Jesus. I do not know what you know about Jesus. Like, the character in history, Jesus. The literal figure in history, Jesus. The one who reset the calendar. Maybe you think He was a good teacher, a prophet. I will tell you this, that is just a brilliant story. Like, that move right there, that was documented in the Word that we have today, that we believe is Holy Spirit inspired. That is a brilliant story. Like, literary authors, the greatest, most brilliant people, could you imagine just thinking of a story right there in the moment? To put the Pharisees in the story to teach them the lesson that you want them to learn. It is a really brilliant story.

It says, “**The older brother became angry and refused to go in...**” He is missing out on the party. And his first step to missing out on the fun, to enjoy the Father is anger.

### *1. Anger is a Sign You Have Drifted from the Father*

Anger. Anger marks you. Short-tempered. Hey, I know you do not want to be that way. You start to think, “Man, I’m becoming like my dad was. I am becoming like my mom was. How did this happen? I do not want to be cynical. I don’t want to be so critical.” We know you do not. You just become that. Right? And it is not of God. Right? The Fruit of the Spirit: love, anger, peace,

patience, kindness, goodness ... no. No, if you think about the fruit of the Spirit, they are all, like, in stark contrast to anger.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. This is what the Spirit of God produces in your life. So, if you are angry, what does that mean? What is the Spirit of God doing? That should be a little bit of a wake-up call. Like, "Whoa, hold on! Let us back up the tape, man. How did this happen?" Because here is what the Scripture says, Psalm 16:11, "... **you fill me** (you, God, fill me) **with joy in your presence ...**" You fill me with joy in your presence. Nehemiah 8:10, "... **the joy of the Lord is your strength.**" The joy of the Lord, joy of the Lord. "But, God, I don't enjoy You. It is not my strength. I am kind of bored with You. I am just kind of moving through the motions. My heart is drifting from You. Lord, have I become the Pharisee? Have I become those people that You had the harsh word toward? Have I drifted? Have I just been going through the motions?" Man, this is what religiosity will do. This is why I am so **PASSIONATE** about cultural Christianity because it will kill you slowly! It will kill you slowly. And all the while, you will think you had a relationship with God, when you did not. You were going through the motions because you learned them from a Pharisee. That is what He says to the Pharisees, "You make converts like you." That is not, that is not, that is not in here! (opens up Bible and motions to it) It is not in here! I know it is new. I am telling you; it is not in there! I am pleading with you! Try me! Test me! Look! Do not settle for dead religion. It is not worth it. It is not worth it. There is something better out there. You are missing out on the party! You are missing out on the party!

For the brother, what is his problem? It is arrogance. Where does his anger come from? We are going to talk about pride and envy in a minute. Those are the foundation of his anger. He is like, "God, you're doing it wrong!" "Dad, don't you see? You should have gotten the calf for me! You shouldn't be doing this!" And so, that is the foundation of his anger, is: "Why am I not God?" When something goes wrong, and you are frustrated with the outcome, I want you to know, completely, God was sovereign over that outcome. And your anger is saying, "God, you did it wrong! You do not know, like I know. You are not as wise as I am. I would have done it different. I would have built the system different. God, why did you not you make me God?" That is the sin that made the devil the devil. Lucifer, in heaven, said, "Hey, I don't want to worship you, God. I want to BE God!" He falls to the earth, and we are part of this big cosmic experiment. Right? That is the sin that made the devil the devil. It is that we think we know better than God.

Tim Keller, my favorite quote of his - "*Worry is being fearful that God is going to get it wrong, and bitterness is believing He did.*" Worry is being fearful that God is going to get it wrong and bitterness, or anger, is believing He did. It is not a personality, y'all. "You know, anger is just kind of like, who I am." No, it is not. It is sin. It is sin. Let us call it what it is. It is not of the Spirit of God. It is not cute. Right? And it is way more dangerous than you think. Because what it does is anger gives the devil a foothold in your life, and he will conquer you. And anger will keep you from missing out on the party, the righteous life that God desires.

Let me give you two other verses to support this. One, Ephesians 4:(26-27): "**“In your anger, do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,** (we're talking about anger here, we're talking about anger) **and do not give the devil a foothold.**" He will latch onto your

anger and devour your life. And he will carry you away and you will miss out on the party here. You will miss out on the righteous life here. James 1:19, **“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”** Or the righteous life that God desires. Your anger allows the devil into your life and causes you to miss out on the fun. Miss out on the party.

And what happens to us, guys, is we are so spiritual, we are so religious, we are so churchy, that we sit up here in our tower, and we look out on the world, and we are like, (pointing in different directions) “They’re wrong! They are wrong! They are wrong! They are wrong! They are wrong! They are wrong! They just can’t get it right!” We just get frustrated. You ever feel like, “Where’s the world going? What is it doing? We are losing! Ahhh! I’m just so frustrated!” Angry at other people’s sins. I speak from experience. This happened to me. I woke up from that bad dream.

Our family had just moved into a new house, a new neighborhood, new neighbors. New neighbors are always interesting and getting to know the neighbors. And so, behind our house was an alley. We would park back there. The garage was back there in the alley. And on the other side of the alley was a house that had about an eight-foot tall, board-on-board fence. And I did not really know what was happening on the other side of that fence, but I knew there was a pool back there. I had heard the splashing. And I knew they were kind of known as the house in town with the great ‘party’ backyard, if you will. And it does not matter what time you were in the back of our house; you were listening to their music. I mean, it was a party all the time. I would go back to take out the trash, six in the morning ... (JP begins to beat box) Right? Go back, you know, eleven at night ... (more beat boxing) I mean, people are just partying back there non-stop. I cannot see them, but I know it is happening. I will hear them every now and then yell or splash or whatever. Just non-stop party.

My brain had painted the picture: the Margarita machines and all that because the music is just blasting. It is a club in their backyard non-stop. And so, I start getting frustrated. I am like, what are they doing? And I hear they have a teenage daughter, and I am like, gosh, they need to put some rules around her. You know, a little bit of boundaries. They need to parent better, and I start writing this narrative in my head. And I cannot wait to talk to them because I am writing a sermon. You know, I am a preacher, so we will meet in the alley. It is going to be great. I am going to set them down. Give them a word, a good ‘talking to’. You know, coach them up, let them know how God feels about their party lifestyle. Okay? I am going to let them know, let them know what God thinks about that.

And their first interaction was actually with Monica. So, Monica is back there going to her car. Dads in the back. He walks across the alley and speaks to her. She is telling me this. And to his tremendous credit, right? I am like, it is a good thing it is Monica, you know. If it was me, I had a word. I had a word from the Lord for him! And to his credit, he walked across the alley and said, “Hey, I’m really sorry for the music.” And I am like, she is telling me, and I am like he needs to be sorry. What is he going to do about it? That is what I want to know. And he says, “We have a daughter, we have a 15-year-old daughter.” And I am like, 15, man! Are you serious? Because I had heard her, I had heard her kind of shout one day. Like she said

something, and it was like this unintelligible, drunken slur. I am like, what is wrong with her? What is wrong with them, like, their parenting? Letting their daughter drink and party? Gosh! She is telling me this story. He says, “Yeah, we have a daughter. She is 15. She has Down’s Syndrome, and the music calms her down. So, as soon as she gets up, we turn it up, because it’s the only thing that kind of soothes her.” Ohhh! All of a sudden, the scene behind the fence changed. The painting that I had pictured all changed, and I was embarrassed. And I felt stupid.

Whenever you are really angry at somebody, let me tell you what to do for the rest of your life. This will help you; this will serve you well. Whenever you feel angry at someone, pull them in close. Bring them close. Pull them into your home, sit them at the table. Talk to them. Because what that proximity will do, it will grow your compassion. If you have an issue with that, grab this book (starts flipping through his Bible), and just come up afterwards. I will be up here and let us chapter and verse some things so you can show me why that is not what you are to do. Ok? Because I think what God would have you do is pull them in close. And I am not saying that you should not be angry at sin. But I am saying that your compassion for the sinner will help you address the sin in the right way. You should pull them in close. Move closer to them. Has your heart grown cold to those who are far from God? Have you forgotten you were once them?

**“Look! (He says) All these years I have been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. ...”** What is he doing? All these years I have been here, I have been doing everything, I have been slaving for you. I never disobeyed anything. What is he doing? He is score boarding. “Hey, man, you know ... You don’t see my resumé?” This is the prideful, the arrogant, will always want to show you what they have done. “But don’t you know my track record of faithfulness?”

Could you imagine being in a conversation with somebody, all right, and they start talking about somebody who is really good at something? And you know that you are actually much better at that something than even that person, and you do not say anything. Could you imagine? The prideful, those who are given to pride, will always want to show you what they know. They will always want to tell you the expert that they are, their expertise. You think your ways are better than everyone else. Here is why this matters, guys. When you become angry and prideful, and this is hard for me to say. And I think it is hard for me to say because it is hard for you to hear. (JP lets out a deep sigh) When you become angry and prideful, you are not pleasant. Let me tell you what those close to you cannot tell you. Nobody wants to be around you. You are kind of a beating. You are kind of a beat down to your spouse. You are kind of a beat down to your kids. You are kind of a beat down to your place of business. Even here can be a real challenge. We are glad you are here, but it can be really hard. Because you are just critical ... all the time. And there is not a person in this room that loves to be around Mr. or Mrs. Critical. They are just not. That is not the character trait that is like, “Oh! I want to invite them to my party!” So, they can tell us we served the wrong punch or the wrong cookies and have the wrong decorations and did it at the wrong time at the wrong place. You have got to know that. But there’s hope for you. You are not beyond hope.

## *2. Pride is a Sign You Have Drifted from the Father*



**“I’ve been slaving all this time!”** That is your problem, man. The Father does not want a slave. He does not want a slave. He wants a son; He wants a daughter. He wants a child. He is not looking for a slave. Here is the big news flash: God does not need your help! Okay? He’s God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Let me give it to you from the Scriptures, Acts 17:24-25, **“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything. Rather, He himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.** He does not need your help. He is the Helper. That is literally the word for the Holy Spirit. Ēzer; Helper. He is here to serve you. And you are like, “He’s here to serve me? Is that true?” Let me give you a verse: Mark 10:45 – **“For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”** God’s your helper. He does not need your help.

And so, He is looking for you, and the relationship that He wants. And this is big. And if you are a parent, you get this. Like, literally, you understand this. He wants the relationship that a father, the perfect Father, would have with a child. “I just want to talk to you. I want to laugh with you or hear about your day. I love you. I am not looking for a slave. I am not hiring. I am not looking for employees.” Galatians 4:7 – **“So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir.”** What that word ‘heir’ means is you have an inheritance; that God has an inheritance for you. That you are going to inherit all the glorious riches in Christ. That everything that is coming to Jesus, you have been adopted into. This is really good news forever and ever and ever. He does not need an employee. He is not looking for a slave. He is looking for a child.

When I was younger, I hated mowing the grass. Anybody else hate mowing the grass when they were young? (Raises his hand and looks for others doing the same.) Man, I hated it. It was such a chore. We lived on 20 acres. 20 acres. Now, the yard was like, two acres two of the twenty, but I just did not like it. Anyone love mowing the grass today? You like, really enjoy it. You are like, man, I love going out there. It is my time. A lot of people who hated it growing up, actually love it now. Do you know why? You know what the difference is? It is not the riding lawnmower. Some of you are like, “It’s the John Deere!” No, no, it is not that. It is that it is your lawn. That is the shift. See, when you were younger, you felt like a slave. You’re like, “Oh, I’ve got to mow the grass for them. For the man!” You know? But now it is yours and you take pride in it, because you want your place to look good. Right? It is your lawn.

That is what the dad is saying, “Don’t you understand, all that I have is yours?” And he is being literal, because, like, one-third of his estate went to the younger brother, two-thirds are going to the older brother. All the things are his. And so, are you working for God as a slave, or are you building the Kingdom that you are going to live in forever? It is your Kingdom. You have been adopted into it. You are a child. You are an heir to everything that He has. Are you working FOR God so that He will give you something, or are you working FROM the fact that He has given you everything? And here is how you can know: Do you expect something in return? Do you want the Father, or do you want His stuff? That is what you want to think about. Do I want the Father, or do I want His stuff? Because here is why ... You cannot be grateful for something you feel entitled to. You understand? God wants a heart of thanksgiving and gratitude from you, and you cannot be grateful for something that you feel like He owes you. You cannot be grateful for what you think you are entitled to.

**“... Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.”** “Yet here you are with the calf. You are eating veal over there, and all I wanted was a little cabrito, or whatever you call it, or like a goat hot dog or something. And you are over there, just having a party with the younger brother. Like, why cannot I even get some goat, man! Why you do me like that, Dad? You left me out in the cold! You slighted me!” **“But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!”** He is envious.

### *3. Envy is a Sign You Have Drifted from the Father*

Envy is a sign you have drifted from the Father. It is when you think you are owed something. When you think you are owed something and someone else gets it, that emotion that settles in is envy. It is born out of entitlement. “I deserve a calf! Never even got a goat.” **“Look! All these years I have been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders ...”** “Look! I deserve! I deserve! I deserve! Why don’t I have?”

What do you deserve? Let us create some time and space to answer this question. What do you deserve? Now, some of you Sunday School, you know, award winners, and so, you are like, “Hell! I deserve Hell!” Calm down, calm down, okay? Calm down. I know you know the answer, but you are answering it with your head, not your heart. I am asking you for real, what do you feel like you deserve? Let us talk about that. I want you to answer that. I want you to, what do you feel like you really deserve? And do not give me this ‘hell’ nonsense. Do you feel like you deserve a family? Do you feel like you deserve kids? Do you feel like you deserve health? Do you feel like you deserve a healthy marriage? You know, fun? Do you deserve a vacation? Do you deserve a ‘Me’ day, self-care day? Do you deserve that? What do you deserve? Do you deserve good kids, well-behaved kids? Do you deserve a good job? Do you deserve the promotion? Do you deserve, you know, enough finances so that you do not have to worry about bills? Is that what you deserve? What do you deserve? I want you to answer. In fact, I am just going to give you a minute. You think about it. This is you and God’s time. Try to stay focused. Do not let the Enemy come in and distract you. What do you deserve? You think about it. Stay focused. You are answering: What do you feel like you deserve? (JP pauses for a few seconds.) You got something? Something has come to mind? Give me a head nod if you’re like, “Okay. Something comes to mind I kind of feel like I deserve.” Everyone got something? I am not going to call on you. Just give me a head nod. All right.

We do not spend enough time talking about Eternity. When you realize that everything is coming your way. Everything is coming your way. You have inherited everything. Like, a hundred years from now, you are with God in Paradise. And a hundred thousand years from now, you are with God in Paradise. And a hundred billion years from now, you are with God in Paradise. You have everything. All of your greatest desires, more than you even knew to desire, is fulfilled in Him. That is coming your way. When you realize that is for certain coming your way, not because of what you have done but because of what Jesus did for you, then you are free just to enjoy the Father. You are freed up. You’re like, “Okay, I’m not trying to earn something from you. I am not trying to perform for you. You have already given me everything. I just do not have it yet, in the realest sense, and I am just free to lose my life for your sake. I am free to talk about Jesus to

people. I am free to be embarrassed. I am free to be naïve for the sake of the Kingdom. You know, just to live like there is another world and I am going to die and be there forever. I am free to lose my life for your sake. I'm free to actually live a real Christian life." I do not know who you know that is doing that right now, but if you know anyone that is doing that right now, meet with them. Ask them how. Say, "What's your secret? It just seems like your relationship with Jesus impacts every single thing you do, say, and think."

So, his father went out and pleaded with him. **"My son,' the father said, (this is a tender word) '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.'"** Scene over. Curtain closed. And he is left envious of the brother.

You ever heard that Heaven starts here? Like, eternal life starts here? Like, Heaven, when you really know that you are going to be with God forever, that mentality, that perspective, it begins to impact your life here. Heaven starts right now. It is not 'one day', it starts right now. So does Hell. And Hell, a commercial, a glimpse of Hell, you will create this cage of cynicism that you live in, that you do not realize that you live in. All the while, you are drifting from the Father. And what life looks like is you are just constantly missing out on all the fun. Everybody else around you is having fun, but you just do not. Your heart, it turns south, your lens gets broken, and you just cannot find joy in anything. And Hell can start, here, too. And you look at what you are doing, and it is confusing because you are doing all the things you have always done. "But I've got the quiet time, and I'm doing the 'devo', and I'm saying the prayers, and I'm going to church." Relationships take maintenance. All of them do. Right? I mean, I have seen this in marriage. It is so easy to see in marriage. People get married, they have the honeymoon season, all the 'feels' are there, they hit, you know, sometimes it's Year 2, sometimes it's Year 7, they look up, "I do not even know you. I do not like you. We are stuck in this covenant together, under this house. I do not want to be with you. I don't feel things towards you." Somehow, there is this slow, exhausting drift. It happens in Life Groups. People are always looking for the "right: Life Group. Life Groups are not found, they are forged. Really dysfunctional people, who do not like each other, and are opposite of each other, they get together, and under the name of Jesus, begin to make it work. And years down the road they have something really beautiful. That same is true for marriage, the same is true for Life Groups. It is true for just about any relationship. The same is true for God.

Let us talk about my marriage for a minute. My wife, she loves these flowers that I cannot really say the name of them. It always sounds like I am saying women's underwear. (JP stumbles over the pronunciation of peonies.) She loves peonies. The flower. And she loves, this is going to be confusing to you guys, but she loves El Conquistador (a local restaurant). Right? So, that is where we go. And so, she loves El Con. And she loves when I ask her, "How was your day?" And I mean it, you know? And then she loves to end Date Nights by playing a game, like a card game or something. It is not how I like to end Date Nights, but that is how she likes to end Date Nights. It is fun ... pray for me. And so, you can imagine, if I am going to take her on, like, the Dream Date, and I show up with the peonies, and I say, "Hey, get in the truck. We are going to El Con. And we go to El Con, and we sit down, and I say, "Hey, how was your day?" And I gaze deep in her eyes, "How was your day? I want to know." And then I take her home, and I say, "Hey, I called the neighbors. They are going to come over for a Spades Tournament. Right? Cap

off the night with a good tournament of Spades. It is like her dream Date Night, you know. And then the next day I show up with the peonies. (JP stumbles on the name again) Man, we have got to find an easier flower name - Gerber Daisies! I show up with the flowers, and I say, "Hey, get in the truck. We're going to El Con." And we go to El Con, and I sit down and say, "How was your day?" And I say, "By the way, the neighbors are coming over for Spades." And then the next day I show up with the flowers and say, "Hey, get in the truck. We're going to El Con." And I sit down and say, "How was your day? Hey, the neighbors are coming over, and we're playing Spades." Then the next day, I say, "Hey!" I show up with flowers and say, "I'm taking you to El Con." Day 5 or 6, she's going to start to think, "I don't know if your heart's really in this. It seems like you are just doing these things just because you know to do these things. You are not actually pursuing me. I think you shifted into cruise control."

All relationships require maintenance. Sometimes you have got to get creative. Do things outside of your comfort zone. Maybe walk up to a stranger and ask them if they know Jesus. Go for a walk and listen to worship music. Get in nature if that is not what you do. Maybe take a bubble bath. I do not know. Right? It is going to be okay. Right? Figure out what you can do to kind of "spice it up" a bit in your relationship with the Lord. Because if you are just going through these motions, it is not surprising that you are drifting.

In summary, the sins of the Pharisee, far from the Father, are anger, pride, and envy. Anger, pride, and envy. I cannot let you know if you are drifting, but I can help you see if you have drifted. Does anger mark your life? Does pride mark your life? Does envy mark your life? Has your heart grown cold towards sinners?

I got on the shore of that beach and realized that we were not where we started. I started to hike back to Mom, and when I got to her, the question I asked, "Where have you been? Where have you been?" And you know what she said. She's like, "I've been right here. I told you not to lose sight of me. I've not gone anywhere." This is what the Lord would say to you, "I have been right here. I have not gone anywhere. All the while, you have been slowly drifting from me."

I went to church one Sunday. It was a church that I was on staff at, but I was not preaching that Sunday, and so we went. And that morning, I do not know if you guys know, but sometimes Sunday mornings are hectic. The kids were not getting along, and Monica and I were in an argument. I had spilled my coffee in the car. And we were driving there, and because we were running a little bit late, there was a line, and it was hard to get in the parking lot. We had to park far away. I started the walk in, and my heart was just hardened, and somebody wanted to come up and talk in the parking lot, a little counseling session, impromptu right there, and I am running in late. And I finally get inside to put my kids in the Kids Ministry, but it is closed because it is full because we were running late. So, great! They are going to be in the service with me today. I am not going to hear much but let me get my cup of coffee. "Oh, sorry, sir. We are out of coffee, but we are about to get some more. Can you wait a minute?" "No, because the service is starting and I'm already late, so let me just get in there without my coffee. Because all I need to do is just hear a message from my guy. You know, a little 'chicken soup for the soul'. Preach a sermon to me, fill my heart. It is going to be okay. My heart is not in a good spot right now, but if I just get my sermon fix, it is going to be good. I go inside and my guy's not even preaching. It is a guest. "Are you serious? God, why do you hate me?"

Because this is what we do. We treat church like it is a sporting event. We have got people we like; you know, we have got our favorites. Is your team playing? Be careful with that. It is a step towards Pharisaical ways. I know you mean to encourage. “JP, you’re my guy. I love when you preach.” But it is a step toward consumerism. You do not realize it, and I do it, too. I am guilty.

There is a man giving a message that day named John Piper. And I have got a lot of respect for Pastor John. He says a lot of great things. I respect the way he has lived his life. He has created some great resources. Not my favorite preacher, if I am honest. So, not super excited about that. And he is preaching on the prodigal son, out of Luke 15. And I am like, “Oh my goodness! This story that I know backwards and forwards and upside down. I just need a break, God. And I know who I am! I am the prodigal. I know! I stumbled into church 19 years ago. Sat in the back row, smelled like smoke, hungover. Heard the gospel. I know. I am the prodigal. Drugs, sex, and rock and roll! I get it. I know my role, I’m the prodigal.” And he starts preaching this sermon, and he starts talking about the older brother. And the Holy Spirit just came in and filleted my heart. And I said, “How did this happen? I have become the older brother. When did this happen to me? How did I get here? I have just been swimming in the ocean, bobbing in the waves, doing all the things I am supposed to be doing, and somehow my heart has drifted from the Father. I took my eyes off Him. I do not enjoy Him anymore. He is not that much fun. All the things I get to do become responsibilities; the things I feel like I have to do. How did I become a Pharisee? An accidental Pharisee.”

So, maybe you are there. Then ask, what do you do? The same as last week. Your sins are just like the one eating with the pigs. Having fun with prostitutes. Same sins. Same kinds of sins. Same actions required. Just turn around. Repent. So maybe that is you, right? Maybe that is what you need to hear. And so, I am going to give you a minute just to do what we did last week. Just repent. Just to yourself. Talk to God. You want to come up with something. Say, “Lord, this is where I’ve been. This is what is in my heart right now. I need your help. I need you to fix this in me.” He will. He is faithful. He is faithful and just. He forgives. He is a God of mercy. Never has He left you. Never has He forsaken you.

Let us pray together. Father, would You help us with that. Show us where we are missing it. What we have done wrong. Where we have moved far from You. Would You bring something to mind, Lord? Something that we can repent from, something that we can turn from right now. I know that if we turn to You, that You are right there. That You will restore us, just like You restore people out of rebellion; You restore churchgoers out of self-righteousness. We believe that You are big enough to do that. We believe that You can restore joy to our relationship with You. That we can experience You, even if we have been following You for 50 years, 60 years, we can experience You in a fresh way. We can fall in love all over again. We can break the routine. Would you show us how? Amen.