



THE PRODIGAL GOD

THE PRODIGAL GOD: A FATHER'S INVITATION

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Scripture Reference: Luke 15:11-15:32

Welcome to the Doxa church podcast. In this series, the Prodigal God, we will take a closer look at the most well-known story in the Bible and uncover what we may have all missed in the account of the forgiving father and his two sons. For more information about Doxa or to join us for a Sunday gathering, go to doxa-church.com.

Good morning church. If I don't know you, my name is Ken Flower and it is good to be with you this morning. I'm a part of our team here. I get to serve as one of our elders serving specifically up in the north region, my family and I live in north Kirkland, Juanita area. And we are once again, back in Luke chapter 15 this morning. So if you have your Bible with you I encourage you to go ahead and open that to Luke chapter 15, and we're going to be focused specifically verses 25 to 32, which Jamie, just read. Now you did hear that read in another translation this morning. We got to hear God's word from the new international version, which is another great translation of scripture. We intentionally, because we've been spending time in the same story for this six week series intentionally each week, we're hearing a different translation because we believe there are many translations that have faithfully translated the original words that God gave to us and that they are great options for us to use.

We want to introduce those to you this morning. Now a couple of weeks ago, it was actually about a month ago. My, my wife's parents were visiting. They came from Colorado. It was during the heat wave, which is an awesome time to have your in-laws with you when your house is like a hundred degrees, we loved them and it was fantastic to have them with us. And we were

at a park, like a mile from our house mile and a half, and we're coming back. We're just trying to escape the heat, we're out by the lake. We're coming back home towards the end of the evening. And for whatever reason, I decide that I'm going to try to take a shortcut back to our house. I'm literally like we're two miles from our house. We're not far at all. And I think in my head, I'm going to cut through this neighborhood to get back to our house, a neighborhood that I don't really know.

And I never drive through, like, I've run through it occasionally, but in my mind, I'm like really good at directions. Like in my as I think about myself. I feel like I usually know where I am. I usually know like which way is north, south, east, and west in my head. I'm pretty good at knowing which way we need to go. So I think this shouldn't be a problem. We start, I'm driving, we're driving through this neighborhood pretty quickly. I've gone down one street and had to turn around because it was a cul-de-sac. I turned down another street and quickly I'm turned around and I'm driving back the direction in which I had just come and out of the back seat. Not for my in-laws, although they're probably thinking this, but they love me too much to do this. But my kids who also love me ask the question, dad, do you know where you're going? And quickly had to quietly turn to Beth who was sitting beside me and said, Hey, can you open up Google maps? And you know, we're like a mile from our house, but can you get us home?

And then how many dads in this room have been driving and heard that from your kids', dad, are you lost this stereotype that men don't generally ask for directions actually has some truth to it. Duke university did a study a couple of years ago, where in this study they found that in general, men are less likely to stop and ask for directions when lost than women are. And men drive more miles a year lost than women do. And the reason for this, I know like we all get it and it probably is true. And it makes sense. But the reason for this is because in our culture, there's an expectation that should know where they're going, which totally isn't fair, but there is that expectation. At least there used to be. And so men who don't want to be perceived as incompetent were less likely then to actually admit that they were lost to open Google maps or to ask someone for directions.

Now here's the point when you're lost, it's more dangerous to be lost when you don't know it and you're not willing to admit it, right. When you know you're lost, you can pull out the phone, you can open Google maps, you can ask someone or stop, stop at a gas station and get directed in the right way. But when you don't see your lost-ness, and you're not willing to admit that you're lost, that's a much more dangerous place to be. Now in this story in Luke chapter 15, that we've been spending these weeks. And which really just to remind us why we're doing this as this story gets to the heart of what Christianity is all about. It gets to the heart of the gospel. And last week we saw in this story that we often call the story, the story of the prodigal son.

And we focus on the one younger son who took off and we say, yes, he was lost. But Jesus tells us that there are two lost sons in this story, right? And we talked about this last week that the younger son was obviously lost. He was clearly lost that he took off, basically told his dad, I wish you were dead. Give me in your inheritance. Now I'm in, he takes off to pursue happiness away from his father. But the older brother we saw last week was equally lost that he never said those terrible things to his dad, but in his heart, he equally did not care about his dad in his heart. All he wanted was his dad's wealth. And so the older brother just had a different way of pursuing it, right? He didn't boldly ask like his younger brother. Instead. He believed that through hard

work responsibility, through being the good son, he could earn the inheritance that he wanted at the end of his father's life.

Just like his younger brother. He didn't care about his father. He only wanted his father's wealth and they just had two very different ways of pursuing that. But both of them were equally lost. Both of them equally alienated from their father. The problem here for the older brother, and this is the point for this morning is that his way of being lost was much more dangerous than the younger brother's way of being lost, the older brother is lost in a more dangerous way. And Tim Keller in his book, *The Prodigal God*. We're probably going to talk about this every single week. I'm hoping we do because this book has been so helpful for us in understanding Jesus, his story here in Luke 15. And I, again, encourage you, we'll say this every week, get it, read it, listen to it, borrow it from the library.

It is such a helpful book. And Tim Keller writes about this in this book saying it may be that Jesus is trying to say that while both of the sons' paths are equally wrong, each one is not equally dangerous. And one of the ironies of the parable is now revealed. The younger son's flight from the father was crashingly obvious he left the father, literally physically and morally though, the older son stayed at home. He was actually more distant and alienated from the father than his brother, because he was blind to his true condition because the elder brother is more blind to what is going on. Being an elder brother, Pharisee is a more spiritually desperate condition.

We talked last week about how the younger brother had just visibly alienated himself from his father, right? He had separated himself and he takes off in rebellion spending his inheritance, recklessly, pursuing life and happiness and wasting it all.

Or we saw that this was the way for many of us. This was the way of self discovery. This was believing that God doesn't have what we need, that we need to move away from God to enter, to find life and to find happiness. And while this was a terrible decision, the younger brother was very clear where he stood, right? There was no deceit. We know he's lost. He probably would tell people he was lost.

And what's so dangerous about the older brother's story here who never leaves home. He's just as alienated. He's just as lost. And yet everyone looking at him would say that he is the model. And he was respected by all the younger brothers' lostness was obvious while the older brother, no one would have called him lost. And here's the problem. And here's why this is so dangerous for us. Older brothers in the room is that until we understand that we're lost, we don't get to be found.

And we always stand on the outside of the party, looking in. Jesus loved good party. And you see throughout the gospels where he would gather at the table with people and feast with them. And the thing that he loved to celebrate, maybe more than anything else was the lost being found earlier in this chapter in Luke 15, Jesus tells two other stories that really are very similar. Both of them where people lose something incredibly valuable to them. One is a man who loses a sheep and leaves the 99 to go pursue the one. The other is a woman who loses a coin in her house and turns her home upside down to find this one coin. And what both of these stories that Jesus tells have in common is that once they find the thing that they were looking for, they call their friends and their neighbors together and they throw a party and they say, come let's rejoice because what was lost has been found.

And in verse seven, Jesus then says of this, there will be more joy in heaven, over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance. And then again, in verse 10, Jesus says, just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God, over one sinner who repents you see the danger of being the older brother is that when we don't realize how lost we are, and we don't admit that we're lost and we can't be found, and we stand on the outside of that party looking, and we don't get to experience the joy of being found earlier in Luke's gospel Levi, who is one of Jesus's disciples called to follow him. Levi was actually one of these tax collectors. One of these younger brothers who had taken off to go pursue life away from his family and his responsibility.

And he had been found in Jesus had called Levi to follow him. And Levi had had discovered life in Jesus himself. And so Levi throws this feast, and this is in Luke chapter five and invites a bunch of other tax collectors to this feast. And guess who else at this party, Jesus is. Pharisees stand outside, just like they're doing here in Luke 15, they stand outside the party grumbling to the disciples saying, why does this Jesus eat with people like this? Why does he care about these tax collectors? Jesus hears them then and answers and verse 29 and says those who are well, have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance the point Jesus is making for us is that it's better to be sick.

He's not saying it's better to be sick versus being healthy. He's saying essentially all of us are sick. All of us desperately need a physician and it's much better to realize that and to see your need, because then you can go to the physician for the healing and for the help that you desperately need. So this morning, what I hope to do and what I want us to see is that we understand how the older brother really shows up in our life, that we begin to see how lost we are, that we begin to understand our sickness. Some of us this morning, maybe are still standing outside the party. We've never been able to realize it, admit how broken and how weak and how needy and how much we need his help and his healing. And we think that we're okay. We think that through maybe our morality or our responsibility or our faithfulness or our work that the father loves us and welcomes us and that he will bless us because of the way that we live in the things that we do. And so we stand outside the party unwilling to see how sick we truly are.

And this morning, I, I hope, and I want for us to begin to see the sickness that is in all of us, the way that all of us are truly lost. Others of us have been outside, but then come in. I think this is me and a lot of ways and probably many of us in the room that we've been outside, that we were that older brother, but the father has, has helped us see our lostness and he's invited us in and we've come into the table and we've realized how desperately sick we are. And we've admitted how lost we are and we've cried out for help. But it's so easy to once again, put ourselves back outside the party. It's so easy for us to start thinking again, like the older brother to start thinking that somehow we can be enough or do enough to earn the father's favor. So for those of you this morning, that fit into that category. And that's me. I think that's a lot of us here. I hope my hope this morning is that we see the lies that we are believing how easy it is, easy it is for us to go back into thinking like older brothers and that we hear the father inviting us once again, to come in to the party.

I want to highlight for us this morning, then four lies, just to help us begin to see, because remember, that's, what's so dangerous about the older brothers kind of lostness. Is it's really hard to see. We have a really hard time seeing it. And so I want to help us see more clearly what this

kind of lostness looks like in our heart and in our lives by highlighting four lies that the older brother often believes.

Now here's the first one, the older brother here and the older brothers among us often believe this. If I live a good life, the father owes me a good life. You hear the older brother in the story, right? The father comes out, pleading with him to come back into the party. And the older brother is just angry indignant that the father would throw a party for his younger rebellious brother.

And the older brother basically says to his dad. After all I've done, I've been slaving away for you all these years. I've never left you. I've never rebelled the way my brother did after all I've done, you've never thrown a party for me so that I could celebrate with my friends. You see the older brother believed that he was owed something from his father because he had been responsible. He'd worked hard. He had been the good son. He believed that because he had been the model son, his father owed him something.

And this is the way that we often think we may never say it. So like boldly. But we often think that if we live a good life, God owes us that if we're faithful, if we're generous, if we serve that, God should take care of us because of that. And then if we suffer, we feel like we must've been done something to deserve that you've probably heard this, the story of Job.

He was a man whose story is told in the old Testament was a righteous man who followed God and God allowed incredible suffering to come into job's life. In one day, he loses his entire family, all of his wealth and even his own health. And he has nothing left. And his friends come to sit with him and to be with him. And at first they're just quiet. They're silent. They're just there trying to be there with him in solidarity. But eventually they begin to speak up what they're really thinking inside. And one of his friends named Elihu tells job, basically job. There must be something that you've done to deserve this. Cause Elihu couldn't fathom, how suffering like this could come on someone. If they hadn't done something wrong to deserve it, you see Elihu had an older brother mindset in his mind. If we do the right thing, then God blesses us. And if we don't do the right, if we don't do the right thing, then God brings suffering. And so he and his mind could not fathom how Job could be righteous.

If Joe was suffering in these incredible ways, Elihu says to Job, listen to me, it's impossible for God to do wrong. And for the almighty to act unjustly for, he repays a person according to his deeds. And he gives him what his conduct deserves. Elihu has this older brother mindset. God then stands up a few chapters later and responds. And he says to Elihu, who is this? Who obscures my counsel with ignorant words, you have not spoken the truth about me. And some of us, I don't know what to do with suffering in our life. And maybe you're in this season right now, maybe for, we don't know why maybe but God has allowed suffering to come and to hit you in ways that you never imagined it would.

And you don't know what to do because you feel like you've been faithful. I feel like you've honored God that you followed him and you don't understand why God would allow something like this to happen to you. And while most of us would probably never say out loud, I've been faithful. God. So you owe me. We often deep in our hearts. Think that way we think maybe. And this is even just a really subtle way that I think we can think if I read my Bible. And if I have a good time in the morning with God and pray and read my Bible, then my day should be a good

day. God's going to bless me for doing that. If I go to church, if I serve where I can, if I give faithfully, if I minimize the big younger brother type sins in my life, my life should and upward, and God should take care of me.

And what happens then when suffering comes, as we're filled with incredible anger and maybe that's you right now, it doesn't feel fair. And maybe the anger is at yourself because you think I must have done something to deserve this. Or maybe the anger is directed towards God, because you don't think you did anything to deserve this. And you don't understand why he would allow this to happen to you. And then we're filled with resentment towards others. When we see God bless them and take care of them.

If I live a good life, God owes me a good life.

The second Lie is this. The father's blessings are limited. You can hear the, you can see the math happening in the older brother's mind when his younger, younger son returns, right? The younger brother comes back. The father throws a robe around him, welcomes him back as a son. And the older brother is only thinking. That means the inheritance is getting even smaller. The younger brothers returned to him as a threat to him receiving the blessing that he wants from his father. Now, this is the, this ultimately is another way that we think as older brothers, we imagine that the father's care his attention his love. His blessing is limited, and there's only so much to go around and we feel threatened by anyone else who receives blessing or care or love from the father.

Because at the end of the day, what we think down deep inside is it just means less for me that the father's attention on someone else means the father can't have attention on me or about me or love me.

This is stupid example, but it's really vivid to me. You think about like a year and a half ago, right? At the beginning of COVID and you go to Costco and you try to buy toilet paper. And you can't because somehow everyone in the world thought that like the world's supply of toilet paper was going to run out and the next two weeks, right? You couldn't find it. And we have this scarcity mindset we view God's love and his care and his attention, just like that, that it's limited. And that we better get some of it while we still can, before it runs out.

And if someone else receives a blessing from God, that means that it's less for me. And then we feel anxious about that and threatened by that. And someone, if God provides for someone in an amazing way, maybe he answers prayer and provides an amazing house for them that they've been praying for or provides, provides for their kids or provides for their family. Things that you've been praying. And you see God answer their prayer and you start to think, man, God sure loves them. He must not care about me. We feel threatened by that. We feel anxious about that because we, at the end of the day, like the older brother believed the father's blessings are limited.

Here's the third lie that we often believe as older brothers I'm loved for what I can do. This is probably, I think for me, it gets to the heart of what this older brother kind of lostness looks like I'm loved for what I can do. You hear it in the older brother's voice? He says, I've been slaving away for you all these years. Dad, I've been slaving away. So you owe me the older brother in us only feels okay. If we think we've done enough. In other words, we think we're only loved or

wanted. If we've done something, if we've performed and we always constantly feel anxious and insecure, wondering if we've done enough to be loved, to be accepted. This is the mindset of Martha who felt like she couldn't just be with Jesus. She couldn't just be with him. That he essentially, you can imagine in Martha's mind thinking, Jesus doesn't just want me. He wants me to serve to do something. So Mary sits at Jesus's feet, ready to just be with them and hear from him. And yet Martha is so busy trying to, trying to do, do, do to serve him.

And Jesus says, Martha, Martha, you're worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. He's just inviting her to be with him. But she can't because she thinks she's only loved for what she does. This older brother mindset says that my relationship with Jesus is connected to what I can do for him to what I can offer to how I perform. And here's, what's so dangerous about this. And here's how it plays out is then when I succeed. So if I feel like I've done something great, and I can say, look what I just did. Jesus, that I feel great. And not only do I feel great, but then I begin to look at others who aren't performing the way I want them to. And I begin to judge them and I have a hyper-inflated view of myself and I feel superior to everyone else around me. And I become hyper critical of others. But on the flip side, when I fail, when I'm not sure if I did enough, then I feel incredibly insecure that I'm destroyed. I'm constantly wondering where I stand. Did I do enough? Am I wanted here? This is the older brother saying I've, I'm loved for what I do.

And the problem with this, you'll never know where you stand. Maybe you feel that way. You just feel constantly unsure of where you stand. Maybe it's with family. Maybe it's with a group of friends. You just feel constantly insecure and unsure. Am I really wanted here? Do I bring something to this table? Do I bring something to this? You're constantly question your place. And ultimately then you can't be present with people, you're not able to actually truly be present with people and love them, because you're always wondering how they feel about you and where you stand with them. You're always wondering if you've done enough. You can't take risks because you're afraid to fail. And you have this hyper inflated view of yourself, constantly critical of others and how they perform. The older brother believes that it is he's only loved because of what he does because of how he performs because of what he brings to the table.

The fourth one is this. I can't be needy. I can't be needy fourth, fourth one. The disciples earlier in Mark, chapter 10 are spending time with Jesus and some parents assumingly, or some people are bringing children to come and meet Jesus. And you can all probably have heard this story before, right? The kids coming to see Jesus and the disciples look at these kids. And you can just imagine what's going through their heads. Jesus is this important person, right? He's the Messiah. Why are we going to allow him to be bothered by these weak needy kids that have nothing to offer? And you can understand even what's going on in their own heads, that they think that they actually did have something to offer that they thought they brought something to the table. They thought that Jesus called them because of how great they were because of all their potential, because of all their skills and their gifts, that they were the chosen ones, because they could be the ones that changed the world and Jesus, saw something then, and then that no one else did.

They didn't realize that they were just like these children, that they had nothing to offer. So because of their mindset, they don't want these kids to come and bother Jesus and Jesus seeing what's happening and seeing how the disciples are turning the kids away. Jesus is indignant with them and he says, let the little children come to me, don't stop them. Because the kingdom of

God belongs to such as these truly. I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God. Like a little child will never enter it. You see the only thing that we need to bring to the table is our need. That's all we have.

Paul says in first Corinthians, he's writing to a church that was super arrogant, that they thought they had arrived. They thought they were spiritual. And he says, not many of you were powerful. Not many of you are wise. Not many of you are noble that none of us brought something to the table. All we brought was our need and our weakness.

But the older brother in us says the opposite that we can't be needy, that we can't be broken. That we have to have something that we offer. This could be for some of us, even part of our story. And we'll talk more about this next week, but some of us maybe even grew up in homes or in places where it wasn't safe to be needy, where we saw what happened to the one in your home that was needy or broken. Maybe you had an older sibling that you always saw. Your parents just filled with anxiousness or anger, wringing their hands over the sibling and sparking, sparking all sorts of things in your household. And you saw that and you knew that you didn't want that.

So you flew under the radar learning not to be needy learning, to be self-sufficient and maybe even finding your identity in being the, being the kid who never had any problems who never created any sparks in the house who never had needs.

I've shared this in the past. But I have an older sister year and a half older than me who in fifth grade around that time really began wrestling with severe mental illness, starting with anorexia nervosa and it, it just evolved and really has affected her in a lot of ways for her life. And I saw as a kid, I remember in my third and fourth grade years watching her brokenness, the she didn't choose, but seeing her weakness, seeing her need and me being desperately afraid to be needy like that. And so I just became the kid that just never, I wanted to be the kid that never caused problems that flew under the radar that had things together.

And I've carried that with me my whole life, where it's hard for me to be needy even like a month ago or two months ago, I was preparing for a sermon here. And I remember just feeling, not in a good place about the sermon, really struggling to think through what I wanted to share with you. And I texted the elders asking for their prayer. And even in that text, I felt really, really like, should I have sent that? Should I ask for their help? Should I reveal that I don't have it all together? That I don't feel good about this sermon? Should I ask for their prayer? And even after I sent the text, I felt unsure of whether or not I should have done that because in my heart, I feel, I feel like I can't be needy that I can't be weak, that I can't be broken.

This fear of being needy leads us then to despise others who are needy, right. We see weak, just like the disciples, despise the kids. We see those who are weak or needy. We falsely believe that we're not like that. And so we then begin to despise them. This, this fear of being needy leads us then to present a false version of ourself to others. People can't really ever get to know us because we have to present this person who has it all together. And ultimately our fear of being needy prevents us from actually having our needs met. We never received because we never ask.

I know this has been a lot of bad news. I'm sorry about that. I do want us to see though how the older brother is in so much of us, that we have absorbed these lies in so many different ways that we think that we can't be needy, that we think that we're only loved because of what we do and

what we offer that we think that God owes us or that, or that suffering coming on us is because of something we've done to deserve it.

That we, like the older brother, ultimately don't think the father loves us or cares about us. And that's the lie that's underneath. All of these other lies. This at the bottom is the real lie that we're believing in these moments as older brothers is that the father doesn't love me. When we talked about this last week, both brothers had believed at some point along the way that their father didn't love them. They had stopped hearing the voice of their father, calling them loved. And that at the core is what we believe as older brothers. When we believe these lies is we ultimately don't think the father really cares about us or loves us.

This is in the garden that the servant brought to Adam and Eve, isn't it. Remember what he came to tempt them. And he said, did God really say that he wanted to question God's care for them. That the father really cared about them.

This is the lie that Satan brought to Jesus in the wilderness. When he said to Jesus, if you are the son of God, why don't you just turn these stones to bread? In other words, he's questioning whether or not the father really cares about Jesus. Why are you out here in the wilderness suffering? Why are you out here in the wilderness hungry? If your father really cares about you, this is the lie that all of us hear constantly does. The father really love us. Here's the word that we all need. And it is. I love this the way the father responds in this story in Luke 15 is what we all need to hear this morning.

He says, son, you're always with me and all that is mine is yours. The word son that he uses is not the traditional word for a son. He actually uses the word here, child, not condescending. He is, he's using this term of just intimacy as a father, reminding his son who thinks he's a hired servant. Who's who thinks his father doesn't care about reminding him of how he feels about him saying child, son. And he gives him a reminder of who he is of his identity. That you're not a hired servant, that you're not a slave in my household. That you're my son. And I love you. It's a son. You are always with me. So he gives him a reminder of his identity. And then he gives her a reminder of his presence that he'll never leave him. That there's nothing can do for his son to no longer be his son anymore. That he will always have his father. And last, he gives a reminder or a promise of his provision. He says all that is mine is yours.

What if we knew that we were a beloved son or a beloved daughter, and we didn't to prove anything and we're not loved because of what we've done. And we're not loved because of the gifts that we have that we're loved because the father set his love upon us. As we sang earlier that he chose us. Not because we chose him, but because he loved us because he wanted us. He saw us in our need in our, in our brokenness, in our weakness. And he set his love upon us. And we did nothing to deserve his love. He loved us and he will never stop loving us. What if we believed that we knew we were secure in his love? What if we knew that God would always be with us? He would never leave us. What if we knew that all of our deepest needs would be met by him?

That all that he has is ours. As Paul writes that he who did not spare his own son, but freely, how will he not freely with him give us all things? What if we knew that in Christ, we have all we could ever want, that he will meet the deepest longings of our hearts because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. And we'll talk about this in the coming weeks. But because of that, this is

true of us church. What the father tells his older son is what the father is telling us today, that son or daughter, you are always with me and I will never leave you. And all that is mine is yours because of what Jesus has done for us. God is pleased to call us his sons and daughters because of what Jesus has done for us. God wants to be with us.

He wants us. And so, so many of us, and maybe as part of your story and ways you've experienced rejection, maybe in your own family, or maybe later in life, but some of us can't believe that we're wanted. We think it must be. If someone wants us, we think it must be because they want something from us. It must be because of something we've done, but we can't accept the reality that we truly are wanted and loved. Well, the gospel says that you are wanted that God wanted you. It wasn't because of anything you did that. He loves you.

God wants us. He didn't choose us because of what we brought to the table. He brought us to the table because he deeply loved us because of what Jesus has done for us. God will give us all that we need and more all that we need. We don't need to have a scarcity mindset. We don't need to worry that the father's attention or care or love is going to run out. He will give us all that we need and more. This story ends kind of as a cliffhanger. We don't know how the older son ultimately responds.

And the story of the, or the painting that Donald introduced the first week by Rembrandt. You look at it up on the screen. You can see as Donald walked us through this, but if you were gone, remind us, you can see on the left, the father bending over his younger son has returned, pouring out his love on him, welcoming him back into the family, but then on the right standing with his arms folded, you see the older brother.

And one thing I learned as I was learning about this painting is that the center of the painting is not the father and the son or the older brother. The center is this dark space between them. And it draws our attention. It creates the question of will the older brother moved towards the father. Will he come up onto the platform to join his father and his younger brother? Or will he keep himself outside the party? And that's the question that Jesus ultimately leaves this with for us. This is the reason that he didn't resolve it. We don't see what the older brother does because he's inviting the Pharisees who are hearing him to respond to that moment. He is calling them into the party. He's saying, I have a seat for you. Just recognize your need, recognize your weakness and come and join me.

And that's what he's leaving us with today as well. He's welcoming us. He's inviting us. The father wants us in his party. He wants us in his home. He's inviting us to the table. And the question is, will you come, will you come and bring your weakness? Will you come and bring your brokenness? Will you come and bring your need and not try to bring anything else and not try to not try to bring your work and not try to bring your gifts and not try to bring your goodness, but just come as you are, will you come to the father and join the party this morning?

Let me pray for us father even now, but I struggle. And I wrestled to really believe that you love me, but I wonder often if I'm enough, if I've done enough and I know many of my friends here feel and wrestle with the same thing, we never know where we stand.

Lord, help us this morning to know that you love us, help us to see that your favor is on us, that you care about us, and it's not because of what we've done. And it's not because of the gifts that

we have. And it's not because of her goodness that you love us because you love us and help us to rest in that love this morning, help us to see that. Like you said to your son, Jesus, that in him, you also look at us and you say, this is my beloved son or daughter with him or her. I am well pleased, help us to receive that this morning, but help us to turn from these lies that the evil one wants us to believe. Lord, help us to turn from them and to know that you deeply, truly love us, help us to see our need, help us to see our lostness and help us to come to you to heal us and help us. We ask for all of this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.