

Introduction (Luke 15:11-32)

We have come this morning to one of the most well known parables in the Bible. It is the story of the prodigal son. Charles Dickens, who wrote twenty novels and over one hundred short stories, said this was the greatest short story ever written. It is rich and full of meaning. It is important to note that this story is the third of three stories that Jesus told to help his audience understand how much joy there is in heaven when a sinner repents.

Chapter fifteen starts by saying that all the tax collectors and sinners were coming to listen to Him. At the same time the Pharisees and scribes were there listening; and they were grumbling about the fact that Jesus welcomed, received, and even ate with the sinners. They regarded themselves as righteous and separated themselves from sinners. What Jesus was doing was despicable to them.

(Luke 15:1-2) "Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. {2} Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.'"

A couple of weeks ago we saw that Zaccheus, a tax collector, had repented. He gave half of his money to the poor and committed himself to give back four times whatever he had wrongfully taken from anyone. God was rejoicing in heaven that tax collectors, prostitutes, and other sinners were repenting. But, the Pharisees and Scribes were jealous. Consequently, they were not happy about it at all. They were not happy with people being healed and delivered. They were not happy about Jesus' ministry. They didn't care that Zaccheus gave half of his possessions to the poor. The Pharisees wanted people to follow them. They had wrong motives and were jealous of Jesus.

(Luke 19:8) "Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

So, Jesus gives three parables to them to share God's heart on the matter. The first parable is about the lost sheep. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine in the open pasture and goes and finds the lost sheep. Upon finding it, he calls his neighbors over to rejoice with him that he has found his lost sheep.

(Luke 15:4-6) "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? {5} When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. {6} And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'"

Jesus gives the point of the parable in verse seven. He says, "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." If the Pharisees and Scribes knew God and were following God, they would be happy about the tax collectors and sinners repenting. If the Pharisees had God's heart and love for people, they would be rejoicing over people being set free from sickness and bondage. They would rejoice over each lost sheep that was found.

(Luke 15:7) "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

Jesus continued and gave them another parable. The message of the second parable was the same as the first. He shares how a woman who had ten silver coins has lost one. She searches carefully all over her house until she finally finds the coin. She is excited and calls her neighbors and friends and tells them to rejoice with her.

(Luke 15:8-9) "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? {9} "When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!'"

Jesus did not want them or us to miss what He was trying to say. He wants the church today to know and understand His heart about repentance. He says, "in the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." God throws a party and gets pretty excited when someone comes to Christ. He gets pretty excited when someone who has been walking in sin humbles himself and gets right with Him. The Pharisees and scribes should have been rejoicing over the changed lives. They should have been rejoicing over the sick, lame, blind, and demon-possessed people being healed and delivered.

(Luke 15:10) "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The first two parables do not talk about the attitude of the Pharisees. They mainly deal with God's attitude. This third parable is the conclusion to this message to them about the joy in heaven when sinners repent. **The main point of these three parables is the joy when something that is lost is found.** But, in this powerful parable, Jesus helps the Pharisees and scribes see their own attitude. In this parable, the prodigal son represents the tax collectors, prostitutes, and other sinners. The older brother represents the self-righteous Pharisees and Scribes. And, the father represents God. He is full of compassion and love. The father's love and joy over his lost son that has returned is hard to comprehend with our worldly minds. It can only be explained by God's perfect, sacrificial, and selfless love. All of this is cleverly woven into this powerful parable called the Prodigal Son. Let's read the story together.

(Luke 15:11-19) "And He said, 'A man had two sons. {12} The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. {13} And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. {14} Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. {15} So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. {16} And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. {17} But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! {18} I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; {19} I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"

(Luke 15:20-24) "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. {21} And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' {22} But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; {23} and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; {24} for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

(Luke 15:25-32) "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. {26} And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. {27} And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' {28} But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. {29} But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; {30} but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' {31} And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. {32} 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

Even though this story is named the Prodigal Son, the main point of the parable is not the prodigal son. The main point of the parable is the father's joy when his wayward son repented and came home. Therefore, I have named our message the Father's Celebration. First, we will look at the younger brother. Next, we will look at the Father's response. Third, we will look at the attitude of the older brother.

The Father's Celebration

1. The younger brother
2. The father
3. The older brother

1. The younger brother

First, let's look at the younger brother, the prodigal son. He asks his father to give him the share of the estate that belongs to him. In the Jewish culture, the older son would get twice as much as the younger son when the father died. But, no son would ask his father for his inheritance early. No son would ask for what he would get when his father died. This was unthinkable in the Jewish culture. It was shameful. It was equivalent of saying that I want you dead. I just want your money.

(Luke 15:11-12) "And He said, 'A man had two sons. {12} The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.'"

In the story, the father divided his wealth between them. The word for wealth is *bios*, which means life. We get our English word *biology* from it, which means the study of life. The father gave his son what he had spent his whole life trying to earn and accumulate. He gave him his life.

One of my children said to Karen one time that she doesn't do anything for them. They said that she only had time for church. Karen prays for our children every day. I pray with her. I know that she pours out her life into our children. This year she spent three weeks with our daughter Julie in Colorado Springs. Julie gave birth to Jason while her husband, who is in the Army, was in Afghanistan. Karen went to Atlanta this year and helped our daughter Sarah with her new born baby girl. Karen went to Tulsa a few weeks ago and babysat her two granddaughters while our oldest daughter and her husband went to a conference in San Diego. Karen visited my son last year and served them when their first child was born. Karen prepares special meals every week for Joanna, who has had food sensitivities. Karen has taken our girls to doctors appointments. She has taken them to all kinds of specialists. She has taxied them to therapy sessions. Karen lays down her life for her children. I have watched her pour out her life into our children for thirty-five years. Sometimes children don't see or appreciate all that their parents do for them.

Our bios or life is basically our time. We give our time in work and convert our time to money. This father poured out his life for this young son. I am sure that the son did not appreciate what the father was doing. By the way, that is exactly what our Father in heaven did. He sent His Son Jesus who poured out His bios or life for our sakes. Again, this was unthinkable in their culture. The Jews would have expected the father to slap the son and strongly rebuke him. But, the father divided up the wealth and gave him his share.

Next, we see that the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country. He did not wait long. He wanted out from under his father's authority. He wanted out from under the father's rules. He wanted to do his own thing. Many young people know more than their parents at this age. They know more about what is acceptable and modest clothing. They know more about what friends they should keep. They know more about who they should date or marry. They don't want their parents counsel. They don't want their parent's religion. They know best, and they go off and do their own thing. That is what this younger brother did. He rejected his father, and their way of life.

(Luke 15:13) "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living."

In fact, he went on a journey into a distant country. He went as far away from his father as he could. He distanced himself from his family. Many young people distance themselves from their parents. They are embarrassed by their old-fashioned parents who cannot relate to the real world. They distance themselves in their communication, in their involvement with the family, and sometimes in proximity, like this young man did.

Next, we find that the prodigal son squandered his estate with loose living. The word for loose is *asotus*, which means wasteful. The word *prodigal* means wastefully or recklessly extravagant, which is exactly how the young man lived. He did not just live wastefully or extravagant; he lived loosely in a moral sense. In verse thirty, his older brother tells the father that his son had devoured his wealth with prostitutes. The young man had lived wastefully and immorally. He not only lived wastefully, he squandered everything. We find that when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred. He did not leave anything in savings. He squandered everything.

(Luke 15:30) “but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes...”

(Luke 15:14) “Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.”

In our first story, the shepherd went out searching for the lost sheep. In the second story, the woman carefully searched and found the lost coin. In this story, the earthly father did not go out looking for the son. But, our heavenly Father was searching and looking for this lost son. The Father used a severe famine to get the young man's attention. The man began to be impoverished. When we begin to see our own spiritual poverty, we are getting closer to returning to God. I love how God will use circumstances in our lives to bring us back to Him. **God will use circumstances in our lives to teach us things.** He will use conflicts, calamities, loss of employment, trials, and tribulations to get our attention and to help us draw closer to Him. Psalms 119:71 says, “It is good that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.” We can learn from our circumstances if we have ears to hear.

When I was in prison ministry, we saw thousands of people coming to Christ. The circumstances that these men and women found themselves in humbled them. Many of them were broken and were ready to receive the gospel. They had come to their senses. I could tell where people were at with one question, “why are you here?” If they confessed their sin, I knew that salvation was knocking at the door. They recognized their impoverishment and were ready to hear the gospel. God will use circumstances in our lives for our good.

Next, we find that the young man hired himself out to a citizen of that country, and he was sent out into the fields to feed the swine. He did not just hire himself out. The Greek word is kollao, which means glued. It is the same word that is used for cleave. He cleaved himself to the Gentile man. He would not let go. He was desperate. The Gentile could not shake him, so he sent him out to tend his herd of pigs. This was shameful for a Jew to bind himself to a Gentile person. And it was shameful for a Jew to tend unclean swine.

(Luke 15:15-16) “So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. {16} And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.”

The young man was so hungry that he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating. When you get so impoverished that you will eat pig food, you are pretty destitute. We also find out that no one was giving him anything. The young man felt alone, separated, and destitute. God has designed us to have fellowship with Him and with one another. The answer to loneliness and isolation is to repent and return to God. We have a lot of isolated people in the East Mountains. They need to return to God, and to return to fellowship with God's people.

The younger brother has defiled himself morally. He has defiled himself economically. He has defiled himself socially. He has defiled himself relationally. His whole life has collapsed and has come crumbling down. He is not in a physical prison, but he has hit the bottom. He is ready to examine himself and his ways and make changes. **Sometimes, it takes a crisis for people to come to their senses and be willing to make a change in their life and behavior.**

It says that the prodigal son came to his senses. The veil was lifted. His eyes were opened. He saw that life under his father was not so bad after all. He said, "how many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired men.'"

(Luke 15:17-19) "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! {18}' I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; {19} I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"

When we see our spiritual depravity and poverty we are getting closer. When we see God's goodness and provision, we are getting even closer. When we come to the point that we confess our sins and return to the Father, we have entered into the kingdom. There is a party about to happen.

Let me say something about the goodness of the Father. The Jews had slaves that worked for their masters. These were people that the master provided food, clothing, shelter, and paid a small wage. If there was more work than the slaves could do, they would hire daily laborers to do the work. They did not receive food, clothing, or shelter, but they did receive a day's wage for their work. The prodigal son realizes that even the daily laborers, the hired men, were well taken care of by his father. His father was a generous man. His father took good care of those he employed. When the young man became destitute, he realized how good he had it when he was at home. He had not appreciated how good he had it while he was living at home. Sometimes, our children get older, come to their senses, and come express their appreciation for all that we have done for them.

In our story, the prodigal son acted shamefully. It was easy for the Pharisees and others to see that he was a sinner. The prodigal son recognized his condition, came back to his father, and repented of his sins. He represented the tax collectors, prostitutes and others that were repenting and confessing their sins. What they had done was shameful and despicable, but what their repentance is cause for a celebration.

2. The father

Now, let's look at the father. The first thing that we see is that while the son is still a long way off, he saw him and felt compassion for him. Even though the son was a long way off, the father saw him. **The father was watching for his return.** The word watch implies prayer. This father had been praying and was expecting him to come home. I can see him sitting on his porch outside his home watching and waiting patiently for his son to return home. How many of you have children that have not been walking with the Lord. Our encouragement is to keep praying for them. Our encouragement is to keep watching for them to return. Don't lose heart. Keep praying for them to come to their senses and return to the Father.

(Luke 15:20) "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."

The father felt compassion for him. The Greek word is *splagchnizomai* (Strong's G4697), which means "to be moved in the inward parts, or to feel compassion." The father became emotional over seeing his son return. In John 11:35, Lazarus had died. When Jesus saw Mary and others weeping,

he was greatly moved and He wept. When the Jews saw Him weep, they said, "See how He loved him." Jesus was moved emotionally just as this father was moved when he saw his son coming home. It gives us a glimpse of the great love that the father had for his son.

(John 11:35-36) "Jesus wept. {36} So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!"

Next, we see that **the Father ran and embraced him and kissed him**. Love is not something that you hide. Love is not something that you keep to yourself. Love needs to be demonstrated and expressed. Proverbs says, "better is open rebuke than love that is concealed." The father did not conceal his love. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.

(Pro 27:5) "Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed."

Let's look at some details of the father's greeting. The father is probably between fifty and sixty years old. He is not a twenty-five year old out for a run. He is an older man who is probably not used to running. But, the father runs to greet his son. He may be sore for days after this sprint to his son. When he gets there, his son is barefoot and in dirty, smelly clothes. The young man has been living and eating with pigs. Many counties and cities have ordinances against raising pigs. Why? Because pig farms smell really bad. I know first hand.

When I was younger, my father had a pig farm in Tennessee. He had a man farm it for him, but in the summers I would go work there. I would wash down the pig stalls, bale and stack hay, paint, and do anything else that needed to be done. We had a thousand pigs on the farm, and it smelled really bad. And when you came in from the pig farm at night, you smelled really bad. We showered and cleaned up at night, but this young man had been living with the pigs for quite some time. The father probably smelled his son way before he reached him. Did it matter to the father that his son was filthy and smelly? No. The father embraced him and kissed him repeatedly. The father was overjoyed that his son had come home. **The father was full of unconditional love.**

When you and I come to the father, we come dirty and smelly. We have the smell of the world on us. We have the filth of the world on us. Does it matter to our heavenly Father? No. He loves us unconditionally. He is so excited that we are coming to Him that He embraces us and kisses us. God's love for us is unbelievable. To the Pharisees, this was shameful. If the son's actions were shameful, the father's welcome and greeting of the son was shameful. This is not how a Jewish man should respond to a son that has squandered the family wealth, lived with the Gentiles, and even worse, lived with pigs. The father's actions were shameful to them. But, this is the love that the Father has for us.

The prodigal son responds to the Father by confessing his sins against God and him. Furthermore, he says that he is no longer worthy to be called his son. When we come to Christ, we come in repentance. None of us come worthy to be His sons and daughters. The wages for our sins is death. All of us have sinned and fallen short. We can't earn His love. We can't earn His forgiveness. We can't earn our adoption. It is by grace that we are saved. The Father gives unmerited favor or grace to his wayward son who has come home.

(Luke 15:21) "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'"

Notice the Father's response. It is like he has not even heard the son's confession. He tells his slaves to do four things. **First, the father brings out the best robe to put on him.** The Greek says protos stole which means the first clothing. I have a suit that I wear for special occasions. I do not wear it every day, or even when I have to dress up. But, on very special occasions, I wear my suit. The father tells them to bring that special suit and put it on his son.

(Luke 15:22-24) "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; {23} and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; {24} for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

I think I would have told the son to go take a shower, use some soap and a wash rag, wash your hair, shave, put on some deodorant, and then put on the best clothes. Aren't you glad the Father tells us to come as we are. He accepts us the way we are. He clothes us in His righteousness. When we come to Christ, we are clothed in His righteousness. Paul said that we are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of us who have been baptized into Christ are clothed with Christ.

(Gal 3:26-27) "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. {27} For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

In Matthew, Jesus tells a parable about the man who shows up to the wedding and is not dressed in wedding clothes. He is thrown out into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. In order to have wedding clothes on, we must be in Christ. The Father clothes us in righteousness when we receive Christ into our lives.

(Matt 22:11-14) "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, {12} and he *said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. {13} Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' {14} For many are called, but few are chosen."

Second, he puts a ring on his youngest son. The ring stands for authority. Scholars tell us this is a signet ring, which has the family emblem on it. They say it is used for business transactions. The father has not only forgiven the son, but he is restoring confidence and trust. **This gave him authority to conduct business transactions.** I have a more difficult time with this. I believe that people earn their trust, particularly when they have been unfaithful. I give forgiveness quickly, but when my trust has been violated, I am a little slower to give that. But, that is exactly what the father does. He puts the ring on his son's hand.

(Luke 15:22-24) "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; {23} and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; {24} for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

Third, the father puts sandals on his feet. The sandals tell me first of all how far down the son has digressed. He is so destitute that he does not even have sandals to wear. The father tells the servants to bring him some sandals and put them on his feet. Having grown up in the Middle East, many of

the poor people did not have shoes on their feet, especially children. They went around bare foot and naked. This is just more evidence of his destitution.

Scholars say that the sandals represent the preparation of the gospel. We are commanded to shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel. They say that the father is re-commissioning the younger son with the gospel. While that may be the correct interpretation, I am not personally sure that this is what is meant in this parable. Here is my take on the sandal.

If you recall the story of Ruth. When Boaz went to take her as his wife, he met with the elders at the gate. He said there was another blood relative closer than him that should have Ruth. He tells her, "if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you..." (See Deuteronomy 25:8-10.)

(Ruth 3:12-13) "Now it is true I am a close relative; however, there is a relative closer than I. {13} "Remain this night, and when morning comes, if he will redeem you, good; let him redeem you. But if he does not wish to redeem you, then I will redeem you, as the LORD lives. Lie down until morning."

So Boaz went to the gate and sat there until the close relative came. When the close relative came by, Boaz asked him to sit down. Boaz took ten men of the elders, and proceeded to have a legal court proceeding. In Ruth 4, we find that it was there custom to remove their sandal and give it to another when they redeemed land or anything else. Boaz redeemed Ruth with a sandal. (See Ruth 4:1-12.)

(Ruth 4:7-8) "Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel. {8} So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." And he removed his sandal."

This is referring to Deuteronomy 25, where the law of redemption is given. If a man refused to build up his brother's wife, the woman was to pull off sandal and spit in his face. Then, that man was to be called, "the house of him whose sandal is removed." This was shameful. It was shameful to be a house whose sandal is removed. I believe that what the Father did for the son is remove his shame from him. The younger son had done many shameful things, but the father took all that shame away and put a sandal on his feet. **The father removed the shame from his youngest son.**

(Deut 25:9-10) "then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' {10} "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'

Fourth, the father brings out the fattened calf. He orders a big celebration. The Greek word that is used for fattened is siteutos (Strong's G4618b). It comes from sitos, which means grain. This is a grain-fattened calf. This was a special calf that was being fattened up for a special occasion. The Jews would not keep the left-over meat, so they would invite all their friends, neighbors, and relatives to come to the cookout. The father was going to throw a big party, a big celebration. How big of a party? Consider this.

(Luke 15:22-24) "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; {23} and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; {24} for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

Ranchers say the ideal size of a fattened calf to butcher is between 450 and 600 pounds. They tell you how much to feed them daily to fatten them with grain. Once they get to the target size, they slaughter them. They figure on getting 45% to 50% of the body weight back in usable cuts of meat. So, if we took a 500 pound calf, we could get back close to 250 pounds of usable meat. The guideline that caterers use is ten ounces of meat per person. There are sixteen ounces in a pound, so that this means there is enough barbecue for 400 people. Another way to look at it is if you gave every person attending two quarter pound burgers, you could feed 444 people with this fattened calf. That is a big party. It is likely that the father was going to invite the whole town to come celebrate with him. This is a big celebration because the father is pretty excited to have his son back.

3. The older brother (vs 25-30)

Finally, we get to the older brother. **The older brother represents the Pharisees** and religious leaders. The older brother was in the field and when he approached, he heard music and dancing. There was a big party going on at home. He asked one of his servants what was going on, and he told him that his brother has come home and his father has killed the fattened calf for him.

(Luke 15:25-27) "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. {26} And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. {27} And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'"

Notice the brother's response. **The older brother is angry and jealous.** He became angry and was not willing to go in and join the party. The older brother could care less about the younger brother coming back safe and sound. He was angry for a number of reasons. Let's take a look at some of them.

(Luke 15:28) "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him."

First, we saw that the younger brother wanted nothing to do with his father and the family. He did not want to be under his rule. He was selfish and wanted his share of the wealth. He wanted to do his own thing. He was shameful in his behavior. The Pharisees listening to this story could easily see how sinful this younger brother was. But the older brother was no different. He was shameful. The older brother should have gone to his younger brother and corrected him about leaving home. As the older brother, it was his responsibility to do that. If he wanted to protect his father's honor and his family's honor, that is what he should have done. But, he did not care about his father, and he did not care about his younger brother. He was happy to have him leave.

Now that his younger brother has come back, he is not happy for another reason. The younger brother has come back and will now be consuming what is going to be his estate. He has squandered his share, and now whatever he consumes is coming out of his share. The older brother is selfish.

He is more concerned about his possessions than the welfare of his younger brother. His true colors are coming out.

Notice what he says when the father came out and pleaded with him to join the celebration. He said, "Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours..." The older brother is self-righteous. He has kept all the commandments. Never mind that the inside of the dish is dirty, the outside of the dish is clean. This is the heart of the Pharisees who saw themselves as righteous. Even though the older son did not love his father or his brother, he looked good outwardly. He had tithed the garden mint, but had neglected the weightier things. He represented the Pharisees.

(Luke 15:29-30) "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; {30}but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'"

The older brother also said that he had served him for so many years. The Greek rendering is that I have been a slave to you for so many years. He used the word *douleo* (Strong's G1398), which means to be a slave. It was very prideful and arrogant. The fact is that his servants had told him that his brother had come home. The older brother was not a slave and did not live like a slave. He had servants serving him. He was living pretty well, but gave the impression that he had been slaving away for his father.

Notice that he was also ungrateful. He said that the father had never given him a young goat to celebrate with his friends. He is ungrateful for all that the father has provided for him, and he is jealous of the celebration being held. The Pharisees were jealous of Jesus and that the attention was not being given to them. Like the older brother, they selfishly wanted the celebration to be for them.

We also see that the older brother did not claim his younger brother. He said, "when this son of yours came..." He did not say his brother, but your son. He has disowned his brother. He is not forgiving him. He is not accepting him. He has nothing to do with them. The Pharisees had nothing to do with sinners. They had nothing to do with tax collectors and prostitutes. Jesus was eating and drinking with them. He was reaching out to them with the gospel. He was concerned with the lost sheep and the lost coin. Jesus was concerned about the prodigal son. But, the older son and the Pharisees could care less about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the younger brother who had gone astray. They just wanted their share of the wealth and to be honored themselves.

The father responded with grace. The older son has openly rebuked and criticized his father. He has dishonored the father. But the father responds with grace. He says, "son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found." I like how the father reminds the older son that the younger son is his brother. The Pharisees had lost sight of the fact that these tax collectors and prostitutes were their brothers and sisters. They were fellow Jews. They had disowned them. They had put made a distinction of who was righteous and who was unrighteous. They were right and the others were sinners. They did not see the sinners as their brothers.

(Luke 15:31-32) "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. {32} But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

Conclusion

Jesus deals with their attitude about sinners repenting and being saved. Just as the older brother should have rejoiced that his younger brother had been found and has been brought back from the dead, the Pharisees should celebrate and rejoice over the fact that tax collectors and prostitutes were being saved. Lives were being changed. People that were dead in their sins were beginning to live. Many people in recent years have criticized Rick Warren. I have defended him on several occasions. I believe God has used him in mighty ways. I believe that the church has lost much of its purpose. But, one of the things that I like most about Rick Warren is the fruit of his ministry. They say that 70% of his congregation came to Christ through their own evangelistic efforts. God has used them in a significant way to reach their community. They are not a church of transplants, but a church of lost sheep that have been found. They are a church of lost coins that have been found. They are a church of prodigal sons that have been found. I rejoice with our Father in heaven over the lives that have been changed through his ministry.

I pray that our church will reach out to the community in the same way. I pray that we will begin to see the lost saved. I pray that we will begin to see people baptized in church. I pray that we will begin to have celebrations. I pray that we will have to bring out the fattened calf to celebrate all the new births. I pray that we will have the Father's heart. I pray that we will rejoice in the things that He rejoices about. I pray that we will be grieved over the things that grieve the Father. I pray that we will join ourselves to His purposes. Jesus said that He had come "to seek and to save that which was lost." I pray that we will reach out and search for those who are lost.

I believe that there are some this morning that may identify with the youngest son. You have sowed some wild oats. You have done your own thing. You have been out in the world, and you have the smell of the world on you. You have done some shameful things. God is running to you this morning. He wants to embrace you and kiss you. I want to close this morning in Isaiah 61. After the gospel is preached, listen to what the Lord wants in our lives.

(Isaiah 61:7-10) "Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, And instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, Everlasting joy will be theirs....I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels...."

He wants to remove the shame. He wants to put sandals on your feet this morning. He wants to put the best robe on you. He wants to clothe you with His righteousness. He wants to clothe you with the garments of salvation. He wants to give you everlasting joy this morning. If that is you, let us pray and agree with you what God is wanting to do in your life this morning.

Let's pray.

Introduction (Luke 15:1-9, 11-19, 19:8)

The main point of these three parables is the _____ when something that is lost is found.

1. The younger brother (Luke 15:11-19, 15:30)

- God will use _____ in our lives to teach us things.
- Sometimes, it takes a _____ for people to come to their senses and be willing to make a change in their life and behavior.

2. The father (Luke 15:20-24)

- The father was _____ for his return.
- The father felt _____ for him. (John 11:35-36)
- The Father _____, _____, and _____ him. (Pro 27:5)
- The father was full of _____.
- First, the father brings out the best _____ to put on him. (Gal 3:26-27, Matt 22:11-14)
- Second, he puts a _____ on his youngest son. This gave him _____ to conduct business transactions.
- Third, the father puts _____ on his feet. (Ruth 3:12-13, 4:7-8, Deut 25:8-10) The father removed the _____ from his youngest son.
- Fourth, the father brings out the fattened _____. He orders a big _____.

3. The older brother (vs 25-32)

- The older brother represents the _____.
- The older brother is _____ and _____.
- The father responded with _____.

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