

The Parable of the Lost Son and his Loving Father

Luke 15:11-32

Prayer:

Living God, we pray that as the Holy Spirit came in the wind and fire to the apostles, so Your Spirit may come to us, breathing new life into our lives, and setting our hearts aflame with love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In Luke 15, Jesus was telling three parables, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost Son. After telling the first two stories, verse 11 opens by saying, Jesus continued:

READ LUKE 15:11-32

Out of these three stories, the interesting thing about the lost Son is that he chose to be lost. This young man made a conscious decision to walk away and get lost. And whereas the shepherd and the woman went looking for the lost sheep and coin, this father stayed at home, he allowed his son to go off and make his pleasure.

Warren Wiersbe's commentary on this passage has been most helpful, and like a good Baptist I have three points.

Rebellion, Repentance, and Rejoicing.

Rebellion

Under Jewish law, apparently; a father could distribute his wealth whilst he was still alive. The eldest son would get twice as much as his younger brother/brothers, and it was also legal for the younger son to sell his share of his inheritance if he chose to. While all this is perfectly legal, it is very disrespectful.

It is a bit like the younger son saying to his Dad '**I wish you were dead!** The problem being, the younger son valued 'things' more than he valued his relationship with his family, and that causes problems.

We see it today, in our everyday lives do not we, people wanting more and more 'things'. The more they have the more they want, and the more they will try and get it. It is a heart problem and when we have a heart problem, it starts to affect our lives and the way we think, and then the way we behave. For the son, he took his money and went on his way giving no thought to his Dad or elder brother, or the rest of the family, if there were any.

He had a party; he lived his life just as he thought fit for a young man with plenty of cash. He was not thinking of the future, he was only thinking of the NOW! If we behave like that, we will soon run out of cash, resources, and being in a faraway place, things can very soon look a lot different, which is exactly what happened.

I quite like watching a TV programme call Wanted Down Under. It is a programme about people wanting to emigrate to Australia or New Zealand. It starts with either the husband wanting to go and trying to convince the wife and children or vice versa. Toward the end of the programme, they watch a DVD from home, from their friends and family saying how much they love and will miss them, and everyone starts crying because they suddenly realise what they could be missing. Which is exactly what happened to the Son in our text. He realised that what he did have, he did not have anymore, but he did not watch a DVD to understand it. He suddenly realised the value of family and what it means to have that loving support around you. The word Prodigal, means wasteful, and how wasteful he was.

Repentance

As we know that the word REPENT means to change our minds, to admit we have made a mistake and maybe fallen into sin. Repentance is to say sorry, and turn from our way of doing things, and to turn to God and do things His way.

And in the son's case, he repented of his sin and sorted it out with God. How ironic is it; that a Jewish boy had to look after pigs when he ran out of money. Has that ever happened to you? Have you knowingly or unknowingly, perhaps it is your nature, been in a rebellious relationship with family or friends that you need to repent of?? One of the difficulties we face today, we live in a community where most people do not know they are doing wrong and feel there is no need to repent. If we reject God's love, we are in sin.

One of the traits of sin is the promise to bring 'FREEDOM,' but it only brings slavery. It promises to bring success, but only bring failure, it promises to bring life, but the wages of sin is death, as it says in Romans. When we are in sin and continue to be by our behaviour, we lose sight of God and something drastic needs to happen to gain our attention. Like looking after pigs!

This young man found himself in a difficult situation suddenly realised that he needed a mind shift, and he had to admit that he was a sinner. Realising that his Dad was indeed a very generous man and understanding that being a hired help is a lot better place to be than feeding pigs. He Repents, time to go home!

Rejoicing

When we see our favourite football team is doing well, what rejoicing there is. My wife and I used to live in Bournemouth, and when the AFC Bournemouth gained promotion to the Premier league some 6 years ago, there was much rejoicing in the town. When there is any good news, we rejoice do we not?

The boy is on his way home, probably with his tail between his legs feeling pretty sorry for himself, practicing his 'I'm sorry Dad' speech. By rights, as he brought disgrace on the family and on the village, he should have been stoned to death. Deut 21:18-21

'If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, 'this son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and drunkard'. Then all the men of his town are to stone him to death.

So, just imagine, there you are full of repentance on your last leg of your journey, home in sight practicing 'please forgive me speech' and people start throwing rocks at your head! Nearly as bad as feeding pigs, right?!

But hang on, what rejoicing, what rejoicing the father expresses, running to his son greeting him with the biggest hug. Can you imagine what that must have felt like? I do not care what you've done son, you're back, let's have a party, robes, rings, fattened calf, GRACE!

Everything that the boy was looking for in a faraway place, was right under his nose all the time. So, everything in the garden is rosy. Until stage right, enters Big Brother; and is he angry.

I have got a big brother, and he used to get very angry with me. I will say I did not deserve it, but I probably did.

Well, this Big Brother is kicking off big time, and he is letting his Dad know it. I have done this for you, I've done that for you, never once have you given me even a goat, let alone the fattened calf. He is not a happy man. Is his anger justified? Maybe to a point. But he did own the farm, he had everything, and he could do with it as he pleased. Sometimes our circumstances may dictate to us how we feel and behave.

Sometimes we may allow our feelings to grow stronger to justify our anger, frustration, bitterness even hatred. Big brother had everything; little brother had nothing in the end. But see that is where there is a twist to the story. Although Big Brother had everything, his focus was on his anger. He was so angry that he could not even celebrate with his family. As far as he was concerned all he had was bitterness. Little brother had nothing left, it had all gone. He was prepared to be a hired help. But the one thing that he gained was far more valuable than anything he could have had before, not just love from his Dad, but GRACE from his Father.

How do you sit with that? Are you the prodigal child? Have you done something so wrong that you are finding it difficult to face going back to put things right? Is there something that has been bugging you for a while that you know you need to put right?

Has someone done something to you, and the hurt runs so deep, you are finding it difficult to forgive? The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not just for the lost. We in the Church need to be reminded of it daily. If we do not get it, how on earth do we expect people that don't know Christ to get it? The Church has a golden opportunity to work together, pray together, praise together, to show the community the Love of God, but more importantly, THE GRACE OF GOD! And what REJOICING there will be!

Prayer

May you be strong to grasp, with all God's people, what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge. So, you may attain to fullness of being, the fullness of God Himself.

Blessings

Mike