

The Father and his Two Sons

Luke 15:11 – 32

Opening

- Parables have two main purposes
 1. Shows us the character of God
 2. Shows us our relationship with God
- This parable is in response to the Pharisees in vs 1, 2: “*What does it mean that Jesus welcomes sinners?*”
 1. The setting – “sinners” are getting closer to Jesus, while the Pharisees are standing behind the people
 2. Three parables in Luke 15 show how God feels when He “welcomes sinners”
 - Rejoices like a shepherd finding the one lost sheep after searching continuously
 - Rejoices like a woman finding a lost coin after searching continuously
 - Rejoices like a father whose lost son come home
- Vs 11 – “There was a man who had two sons...”
 - This is NOT a story only about the prodigal son
 - It IS about a father and his two sons
- “Father give me my share”
 - Jewish law permitted an estate to be “settled” while the father was still living, but this was rare
 - The estate would never be “distributed” while the father was living – this would have taken away the father’s ability to care for himself!
- Major shame of the younger son
 - 1. Major insult to his father -- it would be like saying “I wish you were dead”
 - 2. Demanding that the estate be distributed immediately (NOTE: the *older brother* received twice as much (Deut 21:17))
- Major shame of the older brother
 - In Jewish law and culture the oldest son was responsible for mediating disputes among siblings, including with their father (see example of Rueben with Joseph in Genesis 37)
 - Did not try to correct and restore his younger brother
 - Quietly took his share at the same time as his younger brother – but got twice as much! (vs 12 “He divided the property between them”

The Younger Son (vs 12 – 20)

- Alienated himself from his father, his family, and the community – this was shocking and disgusting to the hearers of this parable. He leaves town quickly after getting his money!
- He wasted all his money – Greek is *dee-as-kor-pid'-zo* meaning “to scatter” like throwing seed into the air
- Then a famine comes in that land with extreme poverty! (illustrate/apply – “then State Farm laid off ½ their employees, Mitsubishi closed their plant, ISU enrollment dropped 20%, housing sales drop 50%”)
- The son asks a heathen for a job feeding pigs. In the ancient world, if someone came to you and asked for a handout or a job, the polite way of refusing them was to tell them they could take care of your pigs. It was a way of saying, "Thanks, but no thanks."
- These pods contained very bitter berries and had no nutritional value. Not even pigs would eat them, except in famine
- Then he came to his senses, and comes up with a plan to go home to his father – and he heads for home! The son was motivated by survival, not for caring for his father
- The setting for the reunion of father and son
 - Jewish communities were cluster homes – the fields were far outside the houses
 - A worker in the field would have been the first to see the Prodigal
 - The worker sends word ahead to the father – your son is headed to the house
- *THINK ABOUT THE FIRST TIME JESUS TOLD THIS PARABLE – THE HEARERS MUST BE FASCINATED TO SEE HOW THE FATHER WILL RESPOND*
 - Will the father lecture or punish the son?
 - How will the older brother react to seeing his brother?
 - Will the people in the town accept this man back into community?
 - The father runs to the son (humiliating for a father to act this way), likely pushing through the crowd that was gathering – he wants to see his son but he also wants to save his son from having to go through the crowd of people alone
 - He kisses his son repeatedly – this was both affection and a sign of reconciliation both to the son and the people
- True repentance in vs 21. He drops the part in his plan about being a hired servant. The overwhelming response of the father changes the heart of the son
- The celebration begins
 - Robe represents acceptance
 - Ring represents trust
 - Sandals represents freedom (slaves did not wear sandals)
 - The fattened calf would feed at least 100 people – big party for the community!

The Older Son (vs 25 – 32)

- These 3 parables in Luke 15 change as Jesus peers over the crowd and looks directly at the Pharisees
- Is the Pharisees mentioned in 15:2
 - Dishonors his Father (He does not need us to “serve” Him)
 - Discredits his brother
 - Destructive to himself
- Sees God as...
 - Employer
 - Disciplinarian
- Does not love His father, so he’s not capable of loving his brother
- How does God the Father interact with the Older Son?
 - The Father did NOT get angry with His son, or remind the son how bad his behavior was, or what ‘dad expected him to do’
 - He came out to get His son (v 28)
 - He begged/pleaded with His son to come into the home (v 28)
 - He calls him “my son” (v 31)
 - NOT “my servant” or “my slave”
 - Greek is “tek’non”, meaning ‘child’
 - He affirms the son “You are always with me” (v 31)
 - He reminds him that all He has is his (v 31)
 - It is the inheritance as a son, NOT wages to a slave
- The Father is standing out in the front yard pleading with the older brother to come in the house – to be in relationship with Him and his brother
- Greatest risk of long-term Christians
 - View of God gets complicated
 - Become hardened about our “little brothers” behavior
 - Cause family problems with our attitude about God

Closing

To the prodigal son – all your father wants is for you to come home

To the older brother long-term Christian – will you come in from the front yard and celebrate with your father and family?