

Week 5

The Parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15

A Parable, Video, Scripture & Lesson

Opening Exercise:

- Do you remember the last time you really went ALL out? When you splurged? Was it a new gadget? Was it a fancy dinner? Was it something new for your wardrobe?

- Have you ever been lavish for someone else? Did you throw a best friend a party? Did you build excitement to announce a vacation to someone special?

- How about something just a little smaller: ever take someone for ice cream after a game or a concert? Did you grab a dessert after receiving a promotion?

** “Celebrations often require extravagance, and we freely give lavishly because we want the person to know how special they are to us.” Would you agree with this statement? Do you have any examples of this kind of response to the good things in life?

The Parable: Luke 15:11-32

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

VIDEOS: The Parable of the Prodigal Son

<https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/player/video/432242?session=432243>

STUDY: based on David Marvin's study

- Who are the characters / What are the main aspects contained in this story?
 - o Pharisees (among those Jesus is talking to)
 - o Tax Collectors (among those Jesus is talking to)
 - o Sinners (among those Jesus is talking to)
 - o Father (in the Parable)
 - o Older Brother (in the Parable)
 - o Younger Brother (in the Parable)
 - o Servants (in the Parable)
 - o Any others?

- **Main Idea:** we can turn to God because he will rush to us with compassion and grace no matter what sins or habits are in our past or present.

- **Head Change:** To know God prioritizes a relationship with us over our past behavior.

- **Heart Change:** To feel God's unconditional love for us, his children.

- **Life Change:** To turn to God and accept the grace that he offers to us.

Think about this parable's characters:

- When have you been like the ones who were too judgmental to hear/receive God's grace?
When have you had way too much fun to understand God's plan?

Think about this parable's characters:

- Think of a time when you lost something precious to you. What was your reaction once you realized it was lost? Glasses, keys, cell phone, ring... pet... child... spouse... job...
- Think about the 4 groups outlined in the video:
 - o Which group was Jesus choosing to spend time with from the 4 that the presenter named?
 - o What does God feel when he sees you?
 - o What is God's response to repentance (changing away from sin and facing towards God)?

When we lose something of value, we can become obsessed in our search to find it. We will turn our homes upside down to find the thing we have lost.

- **Read Luke 15:1-2**

- o What does the criticism Jesus level against the Pharisees show you about Jesus' view of sinners?
 - What is revealed about God's heart for sinners?
 - If God were to appear today, what kinds of people would you expect the Son of God to hang out with in our society?

- **In Luke 15:11-24**

- o In what ways can you relate to the son? To the father?
- o What do we find when we look for love, meaning, and value apart from God?

- Reflect on your **relationship** with God:

- o What do you imagine God thinks and feels when he looks at you? Why?
- o In vs. 21, it lists the first thing the father felt was compassion.
 - What is your reaction to God's compassion?

- In the Bible, the Greek word for *compassion* is **splanchnidzo**. This literally translates to a more physical response than just *pity* or *concern*. Splanchnidzo means "to be moved to one's bowels." It is a physical reaction to seeing the needs of another that drives a person to immediate action.

- When the father saw the son, he didn't just feel sorry for him, he had a *moving* experience: his insides did a flip! He didn't even think of what the son had done with his money. He didn't think of his loss of reputation or standing. The compassion he felt for his son was an explosion of joy!

- o What causes you to avoid God?
 - Does anything change for you to know that God experiences splanchnidzo at the mention of your sound or the sight of you in His presence?
 - What are the types of things you imagine God might dislike in you?

- In what ways might a better understanding of God’s compassion change the way you approach faith, prayer, church, etc.?

- **Read Luke 15:18-19**

- The son practices an apology all the way home. The father doesn’t even let him finish his rehearsed speech. Instead, the father showers his son with gifts and throws a feast in his honor.
 - How might you expect to have been welcomed home if you were in the son’s shoes?
 - Now think about the father’s actions towards his son.
 - Do you ever feel that God is disgusted or disappointed in you?
 - Has he done anything to deserve a feast?
 - Have WE done anything to deserve/earn God’s love or salvation?
 - They are given freely – much like this father’s gift to his son
 - What does it mean that God loves you despite your sins?
 - There is no sin so great that God will refuse to love you. Reflect on this.
 - There is no past that is too dirty for God to not embrace you.
 - What can YOU do to turn away from your sin and move towards God’s love even more? (Be specific)
 - The reality is this: God loves sinners. God loves sinners enough to rescue them from their sin. God never asks us to be cleaned or perfect BEFORE turning to him. God always invites us to return home and receive that perfect, loving embrace.

- **What’s Not to Love?!**

In Jesus’ time, giving someone clothing and gifts (such as the robe and the ring the father speaks of) were not just nice signs of one’s hospitality. They symbolized specific rights and privileges.

- In Christ, the same types of privileges and rights are extended to us as believers who repent of our sins, too.
- The father’s robe to his son said for all to see: this boy is my son and not a servant or a slave.
 - What “robe” has God ever given to you?
 - What status has this “robe” given to you in faith?
- The father’s ring was likely a signet ring – a sign of authority to “seal” official household documents. (Read Ephesians 1:13-14)
 - What “ring” has God given to us?
 - How has God marked you with his “seal”?
- The father’s gift of sandals were only given to the members of his household. They were signs of freedom and to, again, note that he was not a servant or slave. (Read Galatians 4:31 - 5:1)
 - Why did Jesus set us free?
 - What does freedom in the name of Jesus Christ mean to you?
 - Have you ever been “outside the faith” looking-in and wondering: “how would my life be different if I was in relationship with God?”
 - How are we to respond to the freedom God gives (freedom in faith, freedom over sin and death, freedom to love and help others, etc.)?

- After reinstating his son's authority and rightful position in the home, the father throws a huge party in his son's honor.
 - How does heaven respond to repentant sinners according to Luke 15:8-10?
 - In faith, we are called sons and daughters of God, and we are covered: our sins, and problems – we are given us the assurance of an abundant love... praise God!