

Our Father's Love For Us  
Luke 15:25-32

If you have been following along with us over the recent weeks in our study of this parable given to us here in Luke chapter 15, you will recall that the Lord Jesus has been leading us through a study that is seemingly focused upon the behaviors of two errant sons. One, a young man who went astray in his behavior demanding that his father give him his portion of his inheritance, and then squandering it all in prodigal living.

And then the other, an older son, who as he witnessed the generosity of his father as he forgave the younger son and welcomed him back into the family could not understand why his father would be so generous towards his younger brother and was very angry about it all.

But while yes, the focus would seem to be all about the behaviors and the attitudes of these two sons, a deeper, more intimate examination reveals that more importantly the real intended message being given within this parable is about the Person of God, about His loving and tender mercy and grace as He walks with His wayward children through their troubled situations of life on this earth.

And may I take a moment at the beginning of today's study and give each of us a word of caution. And that is that too often bible teachers and preachers will simply use parables such as this one as an example and an instruction about how to improve and how to live a better life.

And that is not necessarily wrong. But that is not God's first and most important use of these precious truths that are given within His word. Simply put, we must not simply consider the words of this bible and all of the wisdom and instructions given within it by our Lord to be just an "instruction booklet" for us about how we should or should not live.

In other words, we must not take parables and other teachings such as these as simply being a set of instructions for us about how we should or should not act and behave if we happen to get caught up in similar situations.

Again yes, that would be a good thing to do, but that is not the "best" thing to do, not the first and primary purpose for this bible. And these precious words of

our Lord were never intended for that purpose. Simply trying to copy or to mimic the way we think that God would want us to behave will never truly accomplish His will.

That was one of the major failures within the understanding of the Scribes and the Pharisees. They used God's words as an "instruction booklet". And as we can see within these gospels, the Lord Jesus told them over and over again that they were wrong, completely wrong to use these precious words of scripture in that way, simply as a set of instructions.

No, the real intended purpose of these precious words of scripture is first and foremost to "reveal God our Father to us", His very Person, who He is, His love, His mercy, His grace, His fatherhood, His personality, His wisdom and on and on, ever and always about Him, about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Simply put dear friends, this bible and these words are not first about you and me. They are first and foremost about God.

And yes, as we immerse ourselves fully into who He is, who God is, and as we welcome His Spirit and His righteousness to abide fully within us, within our heart and within our soul, then yes, we will begin to be changed. And we will begin to act and to behave differently, in the ways these scriptures tell us that we should behave. And so, in that way, you and I are then being instructed by these words.

With all of that being said then, we'll return to our study of this precious parable given here by the Lord Jesus. And as we mentioned when we ended our study last week, I would like for us to take an even deeper look into the words of this parable, because here within the response that we see taking place from this loving father, the very face of God, our loving Father, is being revealed to us. And we really do need to take this opportunity to look more closely into His loving face.

Let's pick back up in verse 25 of these words given to us here in Luke chapter 15.

<sup>25</sup> "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

<sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

<sup>27</sup> 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.'

<sup>28</sup> But he (the older brother) was angry and refused to go in. His father

came out and entreated him,

<sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.

<sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!'

<sup>31</sup> And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

<sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' " (Luke 15:25-32)

Folks, I am always in awe of the wise and perceptive way that God presents His truths to us. Here in this parable, God is able to use the personalities and the behaviors of two very errant sons to demonstrate and to reveal His own character and personality to us, a contrast that we might miss if we simply concentrate our thoughts on the behaviors of the two sons.

Here, contrasting to the very self-centered and self-serving characters of the two sons, we are able to begin to see a small glimpse of the character of love and mercy and grace that make up the person and the personality of God.

And yes, our minds are so very small and very self-centered, keeping us from being able to comprehend much of the sweet and loving character of God our Father in such matters as these. But dear Christian, if as we read precious words like these, we will surrender our spirit to listen to God's Spirit, then sometimes He will enable us to grasp and to comprehend a small portion of who He really is, His Person, His Personality, His Character.

And it is then, in those moments that we'll be able to have an understanding that we have never had before, an understanding that we should have about ourselves and about how we ourselves should respond to His great mercy and grace in our own lives and in our own behaviors. And how we are to take our first of the many steps that our Lord wants us to take in our relationship with Him as His beloved sons and daughters.

With all that being said, returning to the words of this parable, as I read these words I am immediately reminded of the words of our Lord concerning "love" in the Book of Deuteronomy. There, as fathers, we are commanded not only to

love God with all that is within us, we are also commanded to diligently teach that love to our children.

And that is exactly what God our Father is doing for you and me here in the words of this parable. Here, regardless of which of these sons we are right at this moment, and yes, at any one moment in time we can be either son, or even both, God here is diligently teaching you and me, His children, about His special kind of love and how He wants it to flow out from His Spirit within us into the way that we care for and minister not only to our own beloved children, but also to all those many other children of God that we live with and walk amongst each day.

Here in this parable, God began first by revealing the gracious and forgiving love that is needful as we minister to those who are openly and defiantly rebellious, those prodigal sons and daughters who reject God and they reject His provision being made through us, and instead demand to have what they think life owes to them, only then to go out and foolishly squander it.

And again, we must be careful to remind ourselves that, too often, we ourselves wander in and out of our own relationship with God. While yes, these behaviors described here in the life of this younger prodigal son take place most often before our salvation. Unfortunately, temptation never dies to us. It is an ever-present predator that pursues and attacks from behind every door. And sometimes, long after we are saved. Much like this prodigal son, and also, much like that wandering sheep, we can get entangled in one sinful lust or another and find ourselves wandering far off from our relationship with God.

But thankfully, regardless of our circumstance, whether saved or unsaved, God still does "receiveth sinful men back to Himself".

And here in this parable, we find this loving father doing exactly that, receiving His sinful son back to himself. And not only receiving him back, but also, with great mercy and grace calling for a great feast and for great rejoicing.

I want to mention again that these words of this loving father calling for the celebration feast reminds us of the words we read earlier in this chapter about the great rejoicing that takes place in heaven when even one sinner repents.

Folks, each and every time that we find ourselves convicted of some sin and as we repent of that sin, if we will listen carefully, God might allow us to hear the music and the shouts of joy of the angels in heaven as they rejoice over our repentance.

Moving on forward in this parable . . . as the rejoicing begins within this family, we find the older son entering into the circumstance. We are told here in verse 25,

<sup>25</sup> “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

<sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

<sup>27</sup> 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.’

(Luke 15:25-27)

Consider the reaction of this older son for a moment. The nature that comes into each of our souls at our birth has a very special kind of corruption within it, a corruption that controls most all of our normal thought processes. A corruption that often leads us down paths of rationale where we should not go, the most common of which is to evaluate the circumstances before us, not independently and on their own merit, but rather to evaluate those circumstances as they relate back to us.

And that is exactly what the older brother did. And we see that response in his words, and vehemently so. Listen!

<sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,

<sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.

<sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ (Luke 15:28-30)

As we said in the study last week, this is a response that is not unfamiliar to us long-time church-goers. We, most often, see ourselves as being the faithful, stay-at-home servants, dutifully doing our part for God, never asking for much and never seeing ourselves as receiving much.

And even to the contrary, we often see ourselves as “just barely getting by”, suffering our sufferings, with our finances, with our jobs, with our health, with our family members. We certainly don't envision ourselves as feasting and rejoicing daily on great and plentiful provisions from God.

No, we instead envision ourselves as being the humble suffering servants of God, satisfied to live on the meager provisions within our paycheck or our retirement check, barely making ends meet.

But may I give you and me a very sound rebuke for such thoughts. And let me say loudly and clearly to us, “Shame on us for thinking such thoughts!” “Shame on us!”

Like this older brother, we truly do have every blessing of God at our very fingertips. As we can see in these words, we are sons of our loving and forgiving God. And as sons, we have a “living inheritance” that allows us the privilege to own and to use every provision within God's kingdom.

And that is exactly what this loving father said to the older son.

<sup>31</sup> . . . he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. (Luke 15:31)

Folks, this is a very, very special truth that God wants you and me to understand and to accept. As His sons, all of the finery and provision within the glorious kingdom of God is ours for our use and pleasure. And not just later on in eternity, but now, in these living years. We have only to cease our self-centered manner of thinking and look around us at the gracious provision that God avails to each of us every day.

Consider exactly what this loving father is saying to his older son. He said, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.”

The sinful nature within both of these sons demanded that the father portion out their ownership, the younger son, more vocal, demanding that it be put into his hand, the older son more quietly waiting for his portion to be handed out to him later.

But here, this father is giving ownership a different and better meaning. Here, the father says, all that I own, we all own together. We each have an undivided ownership of all that we possess.

That folks points out a great fallacy that exists within our corrupted natures. We grab and hold onto things and people and possessions and we pull them tightly into the crook of our arm, keeping them for our own private and personal use, not allowing any other person to have what we have.

We spend our money on things we want for our own use, we build our houses with doors that keep other people out of them. We erect fences to define our property lines for the sole purpose of sending a message to our neighbors about what is ours.

We even have a space around our bodies that we insist that no one invade.

We own things and people and possessions and we grasp them tightly with everything that is within us.

But here, in the nature of this loving father, God is saying to each of us, "No, that is not the intent of the provisions that I make for you each day." "You are to own everything in common, freely sharing it with anyone who has need. And even if you give away all that you have, I will replace it a hundred fold".

In this parable, this older son lived daily in amongst what was probably a great and plentiful family provision. Everything was right in front of him and available for his every use, but he never enjoyed any of its benefits.

Can you imagine such a daily life, plenty of tasty foods and delights all around him, but him not feeling like he can freely eat of it? A spacious house with large rooms and comfortable beds and couches, but he instead probably lived and slept in a small corner of it.

But here, God our Father is saying through the words of this father, that such attitude of daily life is a self-imposed kind of captivity. That a father, and especially God our Father, are not masters within the house, with us no better than lowly servants. This father in this parable and our heavenly father are true Fathers, and we are true sons. And we should own and use and enjoy all that

we have in the same way that our father does. He freely shares all that He possesses. And so should we!

We can and we should live in and lounge in and enjoy every room of our Father's many mansions. We can eat of the finest foods and enjoy the best of relationships. It is all ours for the receiving.

That is God's message of love to us through the words of this father to the older son. He invites us to not only take possession and ownership over all the benefits within His kingdom, He also is inviting us to become like Him, full of grace and mercy toward everyone else, to hold our own possessions loosely within our hands, freely sharing all that we have, because there is always plenty more that He will give to us.

And He especially invites us to join with Him in offering the benefits of His Kingdom to those who are lost and dying in sin. Listen!

<sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:32)

And consider also that while yes, the prodigal kind of brother is often more recognizable and perhaps in many ways easier to minister to, we also owe a debt of love to minister to all of the "older brothers" among us, those of us who suffer with sin in a quieter, more reserved way, ourselves and our fellow long-time church-goers who sit quietly in our pews judging others for their conduct and refusing to truly accept those other, more prodigal brothers back from their wayward travels.

God does not desire for you and me to hold our ownership of anything as some special possession of our own, whether it be our property or our religion. It all belongs to God and should be shared freely with all who desire to come to God's altar of acceptance.

Before we close, let me again point our attention to the condition of the visible church around us today. I must sadly confess that I see the "older brother" personality prevailing throughout the churches. Many of our churches have grown cold and cynical, very much like this older brother in this parable, with even the best of our church members keeping mostly to themselves, showing little acceptance of the prodigals that live amongst them.



Yes, often professing to be “praying for them”, but seldom truly caring about them. And through this parable, God is calling all of us to repentance for that kind of behavior.

Let me say again, this love that God has for you and me is an amazing kind of love. And He is calling us to join Him in it, to hold all things of this life loosely, to share it generously and to know that no matter what we give away, He will always make sure that we ourselves have plenty.

In Christ, you and I are beloved sons of God. And with His Spirit now abiding within us, we now are able to have and to show the same loving generosity that He does. Let's covenant with Him today that we will begin to live and to enjoy His kingdom as His true sons.

I'll close with these words from 1 John 3:1

<sup>1</sup> Behold, what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called the sons of God.(1 John 3:1)

Pray with me.