

The Father's Three Sons Luke 15:11-32

Proposition: You and I who once strayed from the Father have been welcomed back. Now see yourself differently. Now live differently.

Jesus often taught spiritual, eternal truths through stories and the one we are going to re-live today is possibly the best known short story of all time because even though we have heard it so many times, each time we hear it again we get a new insight and we possibly notice more clearly a different character in the story.

Now to help us understand and relate to this story I want to ask you two questions and get a volunteer to write up your answers on the white board;

What is the worst job you can imagine?

What is the worst food you would hate to eat?

As we listen to this story remember that the Father in this story represents God the Father.

Luke 15:11-32 (Contemporary English Version)

Two Sons

11Jesus also told them another story:

12Once a man had two sons. **12**The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

13Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. **14**He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

15He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. **16**He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, but no one gave him a thing. **17**Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to death! **18**I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. **19**I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.' "

20The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

21The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son."

22But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. **23**Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. **24**This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate. **25**The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. **26**So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?"

27The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." **28**The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. **29**But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. **30**This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

31His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

This story is all about the grace of God; that is the unearned, undeserved kindness of God. Now there are three sons I want you to think about in this story and instead of thinking about the youngest son, the naughty one, the loser, I want us to look at the older one first. That is the second son.

When the second son, the good boy who has always done the right things and worked hard for the Father sees the younger son getting spoilt and loved by dad he is really ticked off. He gets so angry that he won't even come into the party. Why? Because this son believes that the harder you work for the Father who is God in the parable, the harder you work for God the better your rewards should be. He feels that you can earn the father's love and earn the father's blessing and if you are good like he has been you can expect the Father to treat you well and to answer your prayers and bless you and if you are bad or foolish you will get nothing from God because you deserve nothing. Which actually sounds fair enough and reasonable but things don't work that way with God. God's love and gifts and blessings are given as he chooses to give. None of us deserve or have earned them by how hard we have tried. Have you even got up in the morning and while you read the bible and pray instead of reading a chapter or a paragraph on this day you read 4x as much as usual and as you are driving to the office inside you can't help thinking, man I have read 4x the normal amount this morning and so I can expect 4x the normal amount of help with things at work today. I gave more this week or I prayed longer this week and so I can expect that God will reward me more greatly because of my efforts. Then when someone else who hasn't prayed as long or read as much or worked as hard as us clearly gets a big answered prayer from God we think, hey, that's not fair Father. Why is he or she getting blessed so much when I have done so much more for you than them? If we ever think or feel like that at times that is legalism and not grace.

I think that this son could have enjoyed and partied with his dad at any time but missed the point, missed grace, and thought it was all about works. Friends, whether the person that the Father is helping and loving deserves it more or less than us is irrelevant. God is good and we can celebrate and enjoy every good thing that comes from his hand to any one of us.

Now let's return to the first son, our main character in this story. He is called the prodigal son, the word prodigal simply means wasteful. This boy was really immature spiritually because he said to His dad, hey I don't want to be on your farm with you, I don't want to hang out with you but I want your stuff and I want it now, give me. And his Father who never takes away a person's free choice gives him his inheritance; his heart must have been breaking with disappointment. And the boy says goodbye old man and he's off. He parties hard, and spends his money on prostitutes and food and he has got lots of mates and is really popular ... until ... the money runs out. That's when he finds who his real friends are. When life is getting hard all his mates do a runner.

Now the father knows what his prodigal son is up to and most likely would have known that his son has wasted his inheritance and is struggling to survive but he does not deposit some money in his son's account, he does not bail him out or protect him from the consequence of his actions. The perfect Father lets him hit rock bottom because he knows that it is then that his son will return to him, that his son will come to his senses and make real life changes. I believe that the perfect Father's example here is a great example to all parents of teenagers or young adults, who go off the rails, love them, be ready to welcome them back but don't bail them out, don't protect them from consequences.

The prodigal gets so desperate and so hungry that he takes what is the worst job in the land for a Jewish boy who should never have anything to do with pigs, unholy, unclean, not cosha pigs. It's the worst job in the land worse than

Not only does he do what would have been considered the worst job in the land for a Hebrew boy but he also begins looking at the pig slop, the most disgusting food worse than

He is filthy, he stinks, he is starving, he probably has some emotional scars as well as physical ones and then it says in vs 17 "Finally, he came to his senses." Consequences are the best teachers for young adults. Finally, he comes to his senses.

17Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving

to death! 18I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. 19I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.' "

The prodigal starts out in the story saying Father/ God give me your goods; now he starts to make his way back home planning to say 'make me your servant.' That's spiritual maturity.

What is your prayer to God? Give me your goods God or make me your servant Lord?

This boy has finally started to grow up and he comes back with a whole different mentality.

20The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

While he was still a long way off the Father runs to the prodigal son. Did you know that God is never stressed, never in a rush, never anxious? The only time in the whole bible when you see God in a rush is right here, when He the Father runs to the one who is coming home. I believe that many of you over the Easter weekend and those of you who have been baptised recently know what it is to have God rush to be with you.

In Hebrew law if a son is a glutton or a drunkard or a womaniser and this boy was all of those things the shamed father would take him to the elders of the city and the men of the city would stone that son to death. I wonder then the full significance of the perfect Father running to this son and covering him with kisses and hugs?

As the boy gives his dad the rehearsed speech, tells him that he is sorry for his sin, that he is never going back to the gluttony, or the womanising or the alcohol his Father does three amazing things.

22But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet.

This wasteful son comes home to Father and the first thing the Father gives him is the best clothes. Now this boy stinks, his clothes would have been torn and probably covered in pig manure and slop and the Father covers him with His best robe, His best clothes. Did you know that the prophet Isaiah said that we prodigals, who have come back to the Father have been robed in His righteousness. He has taken off our filth and robed us in His purity and glory.

Galatians 3:26-27 (Contemporary English Version)

26All of you are God's children because of your faith in Christ Jesus. 27And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes.

God looks at a person who has believed in Jesus, turned from their sin and been baptised under water and sees them as being in Christ, the Father puts his purity and glory on you.

Secondly the Father gives him a ring for his finger. A ring is a symbol of position in the family. That is when God puts his ring on your hand you are not a 'nobody' you are royalty.

Thirdly the Father puts sandals on his feet. Understand this, servants and slaves had bare feet but sons and daughters were given shoes to wear. The Father put sandals on His feet, a ring on his finger and his robe over his body.

I want to say to you this morning if you experienced the Father running to you over the Easter weekend at e-camp or at Mystery Creek, or in recent months, two things.

You need to be baptised in water and the Holy Spirit as soon as possible. God's power will move in your life greatly if you respond quickly.

You who believe and have been baptised in water and the Holy Spirit are a new person you need to see yourself differently.

Carole Soole gave me this 'Christ Bell' months ago and I want us to read it together.

If you are a new Christian this is how you now need to see yourself. I want you to read this aloud with me.

Christ bell

I KNOW WHO I AM

I am God's child (John 1:12)

I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)

I am united with the Lord (1 Cor 6:17)

I am bought with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20)

I am a saint (set apart for God) Eph 1:1

I am a personal witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)

I am the salt and light of the earth (Mtt 5:13-14)

I am a member of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27)

I am free forever from condemnation (Romans 8:1-2)

I am a citizen of Heaven. I am significant (Phil 3:20)

I am free from every charge against me (Romans 8:31-34)

I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Cor 5:17-21)

I have access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:18)

I am seated with Christ in heavenly realms (Eph 2:6)

I cannot be separated from the love of God (Rom 8:35-39)

I am established, anointed, sealed by God (2 Cor 1:21-22)

I am assured that all things work together for good (Rom 8:28)

I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16)

I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Eph 3:12)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil 4:13)

I am the branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15:1-5)

I am God's temple (1 Cor 3:16). I am complete in Christ (2 Col 2:10)

I am hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:3). I have been justified (Romans 5:1)

I am God's co-worker (1 Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 6:1) I am God's workmanship (Eph 2:10)

I am confident that the good works God has begun in me will be completed

(Phil 1:5). I have been bought for a price and forgiven (Col 1:14)

I AM GOD'S CHILD

(Eph 1:5)

If you are a new Christian not only do I want you to know that you need to see yourself differently from now on but you need to live differently.

The third son in this story is the One telling the story. When He was baptised and again on the mount of transfiguration the Father's voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Hebrews 4:15 (Contemporary English Version)

15 Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin!

Friends if you have recently had His robe of purity put over you and His ring of authority put on your finger and you have been given shoes to wear because you are not a servant or a slave but a son or a daughter of the living God, know this, the old life, the old mates, the old habits will still call for your attention. It's too easy to go back to sin but Jesus showed us that even though he was tempted with all the things that we are tempted with He did not sin. Now that you are a new person you may need to give up some friendships, avoid some places, and make some major decisions. You have been forgiven much, you haven't earned His love but He has given it to you, now live differently. Respect your parents, don't ever get drunk or stoned again; don't ever get involved in sexual immorality again, don't lie or gossip or criticise or steal. You are a new creation and though you will be tempted, Jesus shows you and I that we can all live differently.

Hebrews 12;1-2

A Large Crowd of Witnesses

***1Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won't let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us.
2We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete.***

The perfect Son shows us that we can stay out of the pig pen and we can stay away from legalism and live in the Father's company while enjoying the Father's goodness.

We prodigals have been welcomed home by the Father now we are new people with a whole new way of living!