

The Parable of a Loving Father

Turn to Luke 15 – The parable of the Prodigal Son. Of all Jesus' parables, the story of the Prodigal Son is probably the most well-known.

- It has been called “The crown jewel of all the parables.”
- Charles Dickens described it as the finest short story ever written.

I. The CONTEXT of the story (vs. 1-3)

This parable was given to answer the accusation of the Pharisees in verses 1-3 (read). It is a **three-fold parable** dealing with finding something that has been lost – A lost sheep (vs. 4-6)... A lost piece of silver (vs. 7-10)... and a lost son (vs. 11-33).

II. The CHARACTERS of the story.

The **Prodigal** = The lost sinner

The **Father** = God the Father – It is a parable about the love of God.

The **Elder Brother** = The Pharisee

While the story is commonly called “the prodigal son,” it is **actually about the father** (12 verses mention the father). I’ve titled this sermon “**The Parable of a Loving Father.**”

The real hero of the story is the prodigal’s daddy. He is an example of what a good father ought to be.

III. The COMMENCEMENT of the story (vs. 11-12)

*** If a child goes astray, it does not mean the father was a bad father. Good fathers sometimes have wayward children.

A. The son’s **DEMAND** (v. 12).

1. By demanding his inheritance before the death of his father, he was implying he wanted his father to die. “Dad, I wish you were dead. I want what is coming to me NOW, and I’m out of here.”

2. It would be no use to plead with this son. **You cannot reason with someone who is hellbent on having their own way.** Therefore, the father grants the son's demand.

- Sometimes nothing will bring a person to their senses better than letting them experience consequences of their own selfish choices.

- *The lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul* (Psalm 106:14-15).

B. The sad **DEPARTURE** (v. 13). It must have hurt this father to watch his son walk out the door. Just as the prodigal's father was hurt by his son's rejection, our heavenly Father is grieved whenever He is forsaken. But He loves you still.

IV. The CRITICAL point of the story (vs. 13-16)

A. The **WASTE**—The word is not found in a King James Bible. The word "prodigal" comes from the word "**wasted**" (v. 13)

1. He arrives in *the far countr* " with pockets full of money. Proverbs 19:4 says, *Wealth maketh many friends.*" He is immediately surrounded by "friends" eager to help him spend his inheritance.

2. Sinful living is expensive, wasteful, and unhealthy. As Proverbs 23:21 says, *The drunkard and the glutton shall come to proverty...*). Or, as someone said, "The fool and his money are soon departed!"

3. Holy living is economical living. Holy living does not ruin a person, but sinful living does.

B. The **WALLOWING** (vs. 14-16). *when he had spent all* (v. 14). When the money is gone, all his so-called friends jump ship, like fleas jumping off a dead dog! He is bankrupt.

V. The CRISIS point of the story (vs. 17-19).

- A. The prodigal's statement in verses 17-19 shows that he remembered what a good daddy he had.
1. He knew his daddy was APPROACHABLE (vs. 12-18).
 2. When he thought of his father, he thought of heaven (v. 18).

What do your children think of when they think of you?

- ➔ The prodigal son's life can be summed up...
- He went to the *dogs*.
 - He ate with the *hogs*.
 - Homeward he *jogs*!
 - He *dropped* the *pail*... *hopped* the *rail*... and *hit* the *trail* for home!

VI. The CLIMAX point of the story (vs. 20-24)

- A. The father's **COMPASSION** (v. 20). Love suffereth long... endureth all things. Love holds on and holds out!
- He never gave up looking for his son (like the **shepherd** looking for the lost sheep, and the **woman** looking for the lost silver).

The father never stopped loving his son. He loved him...

- when he demanded his portion of the inheritance...
 - when he walked out the door...
 - when he wasted everything in riotous living...
 - when he was in the hog pen...
 - in his in stinking, filthy rags.
1. **The son did not find the Father – The Father found his son.**
Where did he find his son? He finds him at the edge of town.
 2. That which is lost does not find itself – It is found by another: The **shepherd** found the lost sheep... The **woman** found the lost silver... The **father** found His lost son.

- B. The festive **CELEBRATION** (vs. 21-23). In each part of this parable there is a celebration (cf. vs. 6-7, 9-10)

1. The father didn't wait until his son was cleaned from the stench of the pig pen on his clothes. He did wait until he was shaved and hair combed.
2. The son is welcomed back with love and acceptance - no questions asked - no apology demanded (v. 22). *BUT, the father said unto him* The **father cuts the son off** before the son can say, *make me as one of th servants.* (cf. v. 19, 22)

VII. The sad CONCLUSION of the story (vs. 25-32)

- A. Once you get to know the elder brother, it is easy to understand why the younger son wanted to leave home.
- B. The elder brother is a picture of the Pharisee. His words reek of **pride** (*"these man ears do I serve thee*)... **self-righteousness** (*neither transgressed I at an time th commandment*)... **anger** (*thou never gavest me a kid*)... and **bitterness** (v. 30).
- C. He was just as "lost" and the prodigal. The prodigal was lost in the "far country" - the elder brother was lost at home.
 - He was lost because he based his relationship with his brother and father **on his own works of righteousness**, rather than on his father's unconditional love.

SUMMATION: GOD LOVES YOU!

- God loves you, even when you don't love Him.
- God loves you, even when you go your own way.
- God loves you, even when you've wasted your life.

It doesn't matter how far you have wandered, or what you have done.

All that matters is God loves you unconditionally and invites you to come to Him just as you are! Will you accept His invitation?

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