

## Luke 15 – Prodigals

Written and typed: 8/20/2023

- Luke 15 starts off by telling us that the Jews (specifically Pharisees and teachers of the law) could not understand Jesus' compassion towards the people they deemed to be unworthy
  - Vs 1-2
    - This is not uncommon as it happened multiple times
      - Luke 19:7 when Jesus was talking with Zacchaeus
      - Luke 5:27-32 when Jesus called Matthew
    - Jesus response: *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."* (Luke 5:31-32)
    - And Jesus certainly meant this
      - Spoke to a woman in John 4:1-45 who had had 5 husbands and was living with number 6 – this one was not even her husband (vs 17-18)
      - Spoke to a woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11
        - I would argue that this was a set up by the Pharisees
        - 1 – where is the man? If this woman was caught in the act, certainly the other guilty party would have been found too
        - 2 – these were scribes and Pharisees who knew the law (vs 5) – in their minds, they didn't need Jesus' approval – so why did they ask him if not to try and trap him as they tried numerous other times
        - This does not negate the fact that Jesus did not throw a stone at her and told her to *"go and sin no more."* (vs 11)
      - Spoke to Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians
        - Acts 8 – approved Stephen's execution (vs 1)
        - Acts 8 – put men & women in prison (vs 3)
        - Acts 9 – went to Damascus with letters of recommendation from the high priest with intent to bring Christians back to Jerusalem for imprisonment or worse (vs 1-3)
        - Acts 9 – described as a murderer (vs 1)
        - This man was murdering Christ's own people and Jesus still talked to him (Acts 9: 4-6)
      - But the Jews of Jesus' day could not understand this type of behavior
- Jesus responds to the Jews in Luke 15 with 3 parables
  - Sheep – vs 4-7
  - Coin – 8-10
  - Prodigal Son – 11-32
- It's important to note at this point that God had a plan to save lost man from the very beginning

- Genesis 3:14-15 – *“The Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.’”*
- Hebrews 4:3 – *“...although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.”*
- God left nothing undone at creation – including the plan of salvation
- Since God had us in mind and still has us in mind, we should have our lost brethren in mind and do our best to bring them back
- The sheep strayed from the flock
  - Still lost, but this was due to the sheep’s ignorance
  - Represents a lack of understanding on the sheep’s part that it needs to stay with the flock
- The coin was neglected
  - The woman just misplaced this coin
  - Again, still lost, but this is due to the woman not taking care of it well
- The prodigal was different – he left willingly
  - He had the love of his father, everything he could ever need, and he just turned his back on it
  - Didn’t leave due to ignorance like the sheep and wasn’t neglected like the coin – he just left
- The prodigal first looked out into the world (vs 11-13)
  - Asked his father for his portion of the inheritance (vs 12)
    - Appears to have no concern as to whether or not this would put his father in a financial bind
    - Just knew that he did not want to wait for his inheritance
  - Went to a far country and *“squandered his property in reckless living.”* (vs 13)
  - The fact that he looked out into the world is not uncommon – many of us have likely done the same at some point
    - Maybe you have friends who participate in activities that you do not participate in and you’ve thought “what am I missing out on?”
    - The truth is that Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world (John 17:11-16)
  - The prodigal simply wanted to see what the world had to offer him
    - In reality, the world ended up getting him instead of him getting the world as he thought would happen
    - Solomon had it all – fame, fortune, you name it Solomon had it or experienced it
    - And what does he say about this? (Ecclesiastes 1:14)
      - All is vanity, a striving after wind
    - 1 John 2:15-17 – do not love the world or the things of the world

- Matthew 6:19-24 – Jesus says to store up for yourselves treasures in heaven and not in the world
    - Because the ruler of the world is Satan (John 12:31 & Ephesians 2:2) and he is trying to blind you (1 Peter 5:8)
  - If Christians want to know how to act, they have the gospel to turn to – not the world
    - Philippians 1:21 – *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*
    - Galatians 2:20 – *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*
  - Satan knows that the Christian life is the best life and that’s why he’s trying to take it away from us (1 Peter 5:8)
  - Solomon knew this to
    - Ecclesiastes 12:13 – *“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”*
  - The prophets knew this, Jesus knew this, but yet we tend to forget it sometimes
  - This world cannot produce true happiness
    - If the world could produce happiness, Solomon would have found it (Ecc 1:14)
  - The Christian life is the happy, hopeful life and we need to make sure that we always remember this
    - Hebrews 13:5 – *“The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”*
- This prodigal looked out to the world and found nothing but trouble
- So why do people in the Lord’s church turn to the world today?
  - A common reason I’ve heard is a hypocritical member
    - Matthew 23:27-28 – *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”*
  - Perhaps the Luke 15 prodigal left due to his older brother (vs 25-32)
    - His older brother was angry that he came back
    - Just like Jonah was when Nineveh repented (Jonah 4)
    - Instead of celebrating with everyone else upon his brother’s return from the far country and certain death had he stayed, he got angry
    - He must have thought “why didn’t my brother get what he deserved” just as Jonah thought of the Ninevites
    - As humans – you do not want what you deserve and the older brother forgot this
    - The lake of fire in Revelation 20 – that’s what we deserve

- Romans 8:1-2 – *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”*
    - But we have received mercy
  - If you consider a congregation of 50 people and someone becomes a prodigal due to being offended by 1 – realize that there are 49 people who did not offend you
  - Christ’s sacrifice was for all – the hypocrite included
    - 1 Peter 1:18-19 – *“knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.”*
    - Christ’s sacrifice was for all imperfections – the actions of the hypocrite if he repents and the actions of the prodigal if he repents
  - Similarly, we worship God because of what He did for us, not because of what man does to/for us
    - Colossians 1:12-14
      - What did man do? What did the hypocrite do? Nothing
      - God qualified, delivered, transferred, and redeemed
      - Man is just the beneficiary of God’s grace if he is obedient
  - Let’s not be hypocritical toward individuals so they won’t be tempted in that way to become prodigals
- When the Luke 15 prodigal left, he looked around – analyzed his current situation (vs 14-16)
  - He found the following
  - Loss
    - Spent everything he had (vs 14)
    - Prodigals have lost sight and therefore, they’ve lost their reward
    - Perhaps they’ve forgotten they’re commitment to *“love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”* (Matthew 22:37)
  - Wreckless living (vs 13)
    - 1 Peter 4:4 refers to this type of living as a *“flood of debauchery”*
  - Lack (vs 14)
    - Prodigals are in famine for the word of God
    - Matthew 6:33, Philippians 3:9 – righteousness does not come from this world
  - He found that this world gave him nothing (vs 16)
    - When he looked around he found no help whatsoever
    - He had left his Christian home and had nobody to turn to in the world
- When the Luke 15 prodigal realized his situation, he looked inward (vs 17)
  - The fact that he came to himself implies that when he was gone, he was not himself
  - He realized that he had become on the same level as pigs

- He realized that the pigs were in the pen because they had to be, but he was there because by leaving his father, he chose to be
- There are those who say that we do not have free will, but in reading these Scriptures – the father didn't force his son away nor did he orchestrate this in any way. Nor did the older brother despite his anger at the end.
- When the prodigal asked for his inheritance, the father did provide it – he let him go but obviously did not want him to go
  - God isn't going to force us to be obedient
  - Matthew 7:13-14 describes 2 gates and 2 ways
    - Jesus isn't going to pick which way we go for us – he recommends the narrow gate and wants us all to find that (vs 13)
    - But there's a wide gate – if mankind couldn't go that way, it wouldn't exist – and Christ is certainly not going to force us to go that way
- This son willingly left for the following reasons
  - Impatience – wanted his inheritance now
  - Selfishness – did not seem to care whether or not this would put his father in trouble financially
  - Foolishness – had everything he could ever need or want when he was with his father. He traded this to be one with the world
- Romans 8:35-39 teaches us that there is no external factor in this world that can separate us from Christ
  - There is but 1 thing omitted from this list – yourself
  - You can choose to leave just like the prodigal in Luke 15 did
  - But remember, he found nothing but trouble and you will too
- Next, this prodigal looked down and became humble (vs 18-19)
  - He realized what he had, that he took things for granted and threw it all away, and he humbled himself
  - James 4:10 – *“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”*
  - Psalm 84:10 – *“For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”*
  - He realized this and he became willing to be a servant
- This prodigal then looked back to how good his life was with his father (vs 20-24)
  - What did he find this time?
  - The father was looking for him
    - Luke 19:10 – *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*
    - We should do the same – we should exhaust all effort to bring back our prodigals
  - The father did not change
    - In our lives, God has not moved
    - He is still there and wants all (2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4)