

“A Tale of Two Sons”
The Parable of the Prodigal Son
Luke 15:11-32

Five movements:

1. Rebellion (vs. 11-13)

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

2. Repentance (vs. 17-18)

“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! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

3. Return (vs. 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.

4. Reconciliation (vs. 22-24)

“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. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

5. Resentment (vs. 28-30)

“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 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.

The Father’s Response (vs. 31-32)

“‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 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.’”

The **context** is the Pharisees’ murmuring over Jesus’ acceptance of and eating with the wrong kind of people. The three parables of lost things in Luke 15 are Jesus’ justification of his actions.

Recap:

- (A) Parable part of a trilogy of parables in response to recurrent tension in Luke’s gospel concerning Jesus’ eating and socializing with “tax collectors and sinners.”
- (B) Designed to clarify the fact that Jesus’ *intention* is to relate to all people, particularly those who are lost, wandering and sinful, in order to extend God’s love to them.
- (C) The religionists’ accusation is absolutely true: This man welcomes sinners and eats with them. This is actually a part of Jesus’ purpose statement, if you will. “This is what I do. Let me help you understand why.”

- (D) The least, the lost and the lonely in Jesus' world are disaffected and wandering Jews who have lost their way. We suggested that a core part of our mission, along with extending God's love to those who have never known Christ, is to welcome home those who have wandered away from the faith, those who are Christians, who have known the way, but now find themselves on a "distant journey."

A few observations and a question:

- 1) Grace doesn't make sense.
- 2) Wasteful extravagance of the son vs. extravagant love of the father.
- 3) Blessings of forgiveness vs. benefits of never leaving home, i.e., restored fellowship vs. uninterrupted fellowship. We stay home to prepare for the return of the prodigals, all the while enjoying unbroken communion and rejoicing in God's ability to "keep" us. Motel 6: "We'll keep the light on for ya."
- 4) Which of the two sons do you identify with? Why?
- 5) What would be your response to this parable? "This, then, is how one needs to learn to read and study the parables. They are not to be *allegorized*. They are to be *heard*—heard as calls to response to Jesus and his mission." Fee/Stuart