
SERMON TRANSCRIPTION

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

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Grace Abounds Church
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Transcript Sample by Faithful Transcript

Turn with me to Luke chapter 15. We are going to spend our time with a story many of us have heard since we were children, usually called “the parable of the prodigal son.” But if you read the whole chapter, Jesus is really telling three stories about lost things: a lost sheep, a lost coin and then a lost son—actually, by the end, you begin to wonder whether there might be two lost sons in the last story.

Luke tells us why Jesus tells these stories. Tax collectors and sinners are drawing near to hear Him, and the religious leaders are complaining, *"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."* That complaint is the doorway into the parable.

Jesus tells them about a father who has two sons. The younger son comes to his father and asks for his share of the inheritance early. In that culture, it was not just a financial request — it was a relational insult. In effect, the son is saying, "I want what belongs to me, but I do not want life with you."

The father gives it to him. The son leaves for a far country, spends everything and eventually finds himself feeding pigs, hungry enough to envy their food.

Now, some of us hear that and say, "Well, that's what happens." And yes, choices have consequences. But Jesus does not tell this story so we can sit comfortably in the audience and say, "Serves him right." He wants us to keep watching.

Luke 15:17 says:

¹⁷And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

— Luke 15:17
King James Version

I love that phrase: *"when he came to himself."* Sin has a way of taking us away from ourselves. We start believing things that, from a distance, we would know are foolish. We tell ourselves, "This will make me free," while becoming more and more enslaved. We tell ourselves, "Nobody can tell me what to do," and then discover that our appetites have been telling us what to do all along.

Then, by the grace of God, there is a moment when the fog begins to clear. The son comes to himself.

He remembers home.

Notice what he remembers first. He remembers that even the hired servants in his father's house have bread enough and to spare. He has wasted his inheritance, but he has not forgotten the character of his father.

That matters. Shame will tell you, "You have gone too far. You have ruined too much. You cannot go home." Repentance says, "I have sinned, but I know where home is."

The son rehearses his speech. Have you ever done that? You know you have to have a difficult conversation, so you practice it in the car. (*congregation chuckles*) You say it in three different tones. You imagine their response. Then you improve your response to their imaginary response. By the time you arrive, you have had the entire argument and the other person has not said a word.

This young man has a speech ready: *"^{18b} Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. ¹⁹ I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."*

It is a good speech; it is honest. He does not minimize what he did. He does not blame the economy in the far country. He does not blame the friends who helped him spend the money. He says, "I have sinned."

Repentance is honest like that. Grace does not require us to pretend the sin was small. Grace is big enough to tell the truth.

And then verse 20 says:

²⁰ And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him —

Now stop there for a second. He saw him while he was still a great way off.

That means the father was not surprised by a knock at the door. He did not open it and say, "Well, look who finally decided to show up." He saw him coming.

I cannot prove from the text that the father stood on that road every afternoon looking into the distance, so I will not pretend the Bible says that. But I can tell you what the Bible does say: before the son reached the house, the father saw him.

And let's keep reading:

— and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

— Luke 15:20
King James Version

The father ran.

The father ran. Jesus does not leave him standing at the house waiting to be approached; the father moves toward the son. The distance between them begins to close because the father is willing to cross it.

Some of you grew up with an image of God as somebody standing on the porch with crossed arms, waiting for you to crawl all the way back and explain yourself thoroughly before He decides whether to let you in.

That is not the father Jesus describes here.

The son starts his speech. He says, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*" But before he can get to the part about becoming a hired servant, the father starts giving orders.

²² But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: ²³ And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

— Luke 15:22-24
King James Version

The robe, the ring and the shoes all communicate welcome and restoration. The father is not leaving him at the edge of the household with a temporary job. He is receiving him back as a son.

The son comes home asking for survival. The father answers with relationship.

And I want somebody to hear this clearly: repentance does not purchase the father's love. Repentance brings the son back into the place where he can receive what the father's heart was already ready to give.

That is grace.

Grace is not God saying sin does not matter. Look at the language: "dead" and "alive again," "lost" and "found." Something serious has happened. But grace means our failure is not stronger than the Father's mercy.

(congregation applauds)

Now, if the story ended there, we would all leave feeling pretty good. Cue the music. Everybody hugs. Roll the credits. *(congregation laughs)* But Jesus is not finished because there is an older brother out in the field.

He hears music. He finds out what happened, and he is angry. He refuses to go into the celebration.

And what does the father do? He goes out to him too.

Do not miss that. The father runs toward the rebellious younger son, and he also goes out to the resentful older son. One son is lost in a far country. The other is lost close to home.

The older brother says, in effect, "I have served you all these years. I never disobeyed. You never gave me a party like this." Do you hear the transaction in that? "I did the work; where is my reward?"

You can live in the Father's house and still relate to Him like an employee.

You can obey outwardly and still be keeping score inwardly. You can do all the right things and quietly resent grace when it is given to somebody you think has done all the wrong things.

That is why this parable is not simply about a wild young man who finally gets his life together. It is about the extravagant heart of the father toward both sons.

Remember who is listening. Sinners are drawing near to Jesus, and religious people are complaining that He welcomes them. The younger brother looks a lot like the people coming in from the far country. The older brother sounds a lot like the people outside the celebration asking why those people are being welcomed.

And Jesus leaves the story open. We are never told whether the older brother goes in.

That means the question lands in the lap of the listener.

Will you come in?

If you identify with the younger son today, hear the good news: get up and go home. You do not have to clean yourself up in the pigpen before you start walking. Come home honestly. Come home repentantly. But come home.

If you identify with the older brother, there is an invitation for you too. Put down the scorecard. Stop measuring the Father's generosity to somebody else as if grace given to them means less grace available for you.

The father's words to the older son are tender: *"31b Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."* In other words, "You have been standing in abundance while thinking like a servant."

Some of us need to come home from rebellion. Some of us need to come home from resentment. Some of us need to come home from believing we have to earn what God gives by grace.

But all of us need the Father.

So wherever you see yourself in this story, do not miss the One Jesus wants us to see most clearly. See the Father who watches the road. See the Father who moves toward both sons. See the Father who tells the truth about what was lost and then celebrates what has been found.

That is the heart of God toward repentant sinners.

And if you are wondering whether you have gone too far, remember the distance in verse 20. The son was still a great way off when the father moved toward him.

Let us pray. Father, some of us have wandered farther than we ever meant to go. Some of us have stayed close outwardly while our hearts grew cold and resentful. Bring us home from both places. Give us honesty to repent, humility to receive grace and joy when grace is given to somebody else. Thank You that in Christ, the lost can be found and the dead can live again. Amen.

(congregation says, "Amen," and applauds)

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