

**IF YOU LEAVE THE FATHER'S HOUSE**

Luke 15:11-32

## INTRODUCTION

- A. This parable is most often identified as the "Parable of the Prodigal Son."
1. Definition of prodigal: adjective -wastefully extravagant; lavish; noun a prodigal person; a person who leaves home to lead a prodigal life but returns repentant. [with allusion to the parable in Luke 15:11-32.]
  2. LK 15:13 – "there wasted his substance with riotous living."
- B. In our text Jesus spends some time talking about the son, but the description of the son is to heighten our appreciation for the magnitude of the father's generous forgiveness.
- C. When we look at the last 3 parables, Jesus is talking about something that was lost and then found. One must understand why Jesus told all 3 of these.
- D. In LK 15:1-2 Jesus is surrounded by a multitude comprised of tax-gatherers and sinners who came to listen to Him. On the outskirts of this group we find the scribes and the Pharisees who cannot understand and appalled that one who allows Himself to be called the Son of God, rabbi, Messiah chooses to be surrounded by such a group of people, and receives them and even eats with them. Jesus addresses this very attitude in these 3 parables.
1. 1<sup>st</sup> Parable – LK 15:4-7 – Why did they go after the 1 lost sheep? They know the value of that sheep.
  2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Parable – LK 15:8-10 – Why did this woman clean house to find the lost coin? Because it equal a day's pay! She understood the significance and joy of finding something so valuable that was lost. But they failed to understand the value of one of those lost souls to God; they failed to see the significance of the salvation of just one soul.
  3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Parable – This parable is told because of what the father does in unthinkable. Not one of them standing there with Jesus would do this. The central character of the parable is not the prodigal son, but the loving gracious father, who represents God and how He feels toward one soul who leaves Him and then returns.
- E. The objectives of our lesson:
1. I want us to see what happens to the prodigal son when he leaves his father, and make the association to one who chooses to the leave the Lord today.
  2. I want us to understand how the Father reacts when the lost (you and I) return. I want us to see the love and the grace of the heavenly Father.

## DISCUSSION

- I. IF YOU LEAVE THE FATHER'S HOUSE, HE WILL LET YOU GO.
- A. The younger son demands his portion of his inheritance – v. 12. This was a bad financial move. He was a typical of a reckless and impulsive youth – he wanted the money and wanted it now.
  - B. To this Jewish father he did not just hear "give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." He heard, "I wish you were dead." The only way a Jewish boy could inherit his portion of his father's estate was that the father had to die. Here we see a profound break in the relationship between the father and the son.
  - C. This was a bad practical move as well for the son. He was not ready to be on his own. He was not responsible enough to be in charge of this much money, much less his life.
  - D. You do not see the father pleading with the son to stay, nor argue with him about his decision, or chased him down as he left. The father let him go! Sometimes the only way to teach a child is to let him learn it for himself. Do not misunderstand that, the father

here is not insensitive. Note v. 24 – the father felt that the boy had died. It hurt him to let him go. It's hard to watch a child make a mess of their own lives.

- E. We are created in the image of God – He gave us “free will” – the ability to choose. God loves us, and He desires that we return love toward Him, and to do that He had to create a creature capable of choosing to love, because that is what love is. It is a choice, not just a feeling.
  - F. God loves us! But God does not force us to love Him in return. God could keep us from turning away; He could hold on to us. God is not powerless, but God is not going to do that. If you leave the Father's house, He will let you go.
  - G. In our leaving we are rejecting the One in whose image we are made! The greatest tribute to God's omnipotence is the fact that He possesses enough power to curb His righteous anger from destroying the rebellious until they have opportunity to repent.
  - H. Think about this – we find it difficult to control our anger toward a harmless officiating mistake at a ball game. If you and I possessed God's power to destroy, and had given as much as He has, history would have turned out much differently. God's self-restrained love is amazing.
  - I. But if you or I choose to leave the Father's house He will let us go!
- II. IF YOU LEAVE THE FATHER'S HOUSE YOU WILL FIND NO LASTING HAPPINESS.
- A. The prodigal son sought happiness away from the Father. 15:13-14.
    - 1. He lived a life of wine, women, and song. V. 30.
    - 2. He left his father's house hoping to find the happiness he thought he would never experience while living with the father. He withheld nothing – he tried every pleasure.
    - 3. How many have tried to do likewise? Millionaires filing for bankruptcy.
  - B. The pleasures of the world can be so alluring, and the world does a marvelous job of making it seem that the penultimate happiness can be experienced right now.
  - C. If one wants to imbibe in the wine, women, and song – Go ahead! You'll love it. But it won't last forever, as a matter of fact, like the prodigal son; it may end sooner than you think.
  - D. Look at EC 2:3-10 – this was written when Israel was at the pinnacle of her prosperity. What a life! 2:11 – “all vanity.” 2:17 – “I hated life.”
  - E. If you think you can find happiness by experimenting with life away from God, then go talk to the person charged with manslaughter because he was drinking at a party – drove home – had a wreck – killed everybody – but himself; talk to the drug addict whose life has been destroyed because “I just wanted to see what it was like; talk to the AIDS victim who wanted an experimental sex life; the single mother; the divorce couple divorced because of the thought of violating their marriage vows was exciting, then talk to their children.
  - D. “I wouldn't do any of those things.” If you have lived apart from God, look back on your life; tell me what you have really accomplished and where you will soon be going!
  - E. If you leave the Father's house, you'll find no lasting happiness.
- III. IF YOU LEAVE THE FATHER'S HOUSE YOU WILL FIND NO GENUINE FREEDOM.
- A. The prodigal son seeks independence – 15:15.
    - 1. Some by-standers probably admired him. He was young, rule and progressive. He wanted liberty and independence, and freedom from the moral restraints of his father. And for a “moment” he thought he had found it.

2. Look at the dark picture that had befallen him. He is feeding the pigs. How free is that? Guilt is not freedom.
  3. He thought he left bondage to pursue a mirage of freedom and found himself at the mercy to the worst master of all. He was a slave to sin. RO 6:16-18.
- B. The devil lies! He says, "It is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven." If you leave the Father's house, desiring to be free from God's moral restraint, you will find yourself enslaved to Satan and sin. Oh, for a while Satan is going to coddle you, and reward you for your service, but like the prodigal son, destruction is sure to follow.
- C. Many who wish to lead the good life seem to be unaware that restraints are involved.
1. Fellowship with God is possible only for the obedient, and obedience is the way to freedom.
  2. JN 8:31-32.
- D. If you leave the Father's house, you will have no genuine freedom.
- IV. IF YOU LEAVE THE FATHER'S HOUSE YOU WILL HAVE NO SELF-RESPECT.
- A. Feed with the swine – 15:16.
1. Have you ever been on a pig farm? They stink, are quite foul, and I would never want to work in one, much less eat the slop that they eat.
  2. Remember here that we have a high class Jewish boy here. His social class and his religious convictions abhor what he is doing. Never in his life did he imagine himself doing such a job, much less eating what the pigs eat.
  3. Example of a teenager committing fornication – child is conceived – stating, "I never thought this would happen to me."
  4. Example of a married person committing fornication – not only have sinned against God but they have sinned against their mate. They have violated the vows they made.
- B. Stop and think! A famine in the land, he is out of money, and needs a job. Forethought might have spared this young man such indignity. Common sense would have told him to go back home. But he dips to the lowest possible level he could have imagined.
- C. When you leave the Father's house, and you cut off your dependence upon Him, you will then discover how deep the pit of evil will take you. You would rather dip into the lowest form of living and jeopardize your body and soul before you would dare come back to God.
- D. The prodigal son is the form of every Christian who gave himself/herself over to fornication, adultery, alcohol, drugs, pornography, or pre-marital sex. LISTEN, like the prodigal son, they never imagined themselves to be there.
- E. Sin will always take you farther than you ever wanted to go, keep you there much longer than you ever wanted to stay, and cost much more than you ever wanted to pay!
- F. If you leave the Father's house, you will eventually have no self-respect.
- V. IF YOU LEAVE THE FATHER'S HOUSE YOU WILL BE ALONE.
- A. All his friends are gone. What happened to all the friends that shared his wealth with him, all the buddies that came to his parties, all the women by his side? They are gone! The world's friends will use you until you have nothing and then leave you. The world has a "give me" philosophy. As long as you have something to give, the world will be your friend. If you ask them to commit they are gone.
- B. Look at Judas!
1. In MT 26:14-16 – He makes friends with the Sanhedrin.
  2. MT 27:3-5 – His new found friends could care less about his conscience.

3. Judas got tired of being in the Father's house, so he went to the world to find friends and they left him to hang himself.
  4. Can we not see the plan that our "friends" have?
  - C. The church – the Father's house – cannot have this attitude. We are to build up one another in love – EP 4:16. We are to encourage and support one another – RO 12:6-16.
    1. If the church emulates a worldly attitude, then she will die.
    2. Our young people are vulnerable to this. They need to see older Christians as supportive, caring, and they should not have to come to us to find this encouragement. We should take the initiative to share it.
  - D. If you leave the Father's house you will be alone, truly alone, for your sin will have separated you from God. IS 59:1, 2.
- VI. THE RETURN TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE HE CAME TO HIS SENSES – 15:17.
- A. It is almost as the prodigal son awoke from unconsciousness. He faced the bitter truth that his life was a mess because of his own foolish decisions.
  - B. Two lessons are found here.
    1. He didn't attempt to blame someone else for his miserable position. Society tells us that we are not responsible for consequences that come upon us because of our actions. We blame our upbringing, our mates, our social environment, our economy, etc. ANYBODY BUT SELF! We must take responsibility for our sin and the consequences it brings upon ourselves and others.
    2. He didn't try to tell himself that this was just a momentary lapse and that he would be on his feet again soon. He humbled himself, faced reality, and said, "I have sinned." That is the beginning of repentance – the humility to say, I am wrong, and I need my heavenly Father. It is the godly sorrow that Paul speaks of in 2 CO 7:10.
  - C. To return to the Father's house we must come to our senses. We must open our eyes and see how far away we have drifted, realize that it is our own doing, and that we truly need the Father.
- VII. LIFE IS BETTER IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE – 15:17-19.
- A. Notice what he plans on saying to his father.
  - B. Please notice that what was once "give men" is now "make me." He is right. None of us are worthy to be called a child of God, but through His own sacrifice He can now make us into what we ought to be. EP 2:10.
  - C. What we learn from the prodigal's resolution is that the lowliest in the Father's house has it better than anyone out in the world.
  - D. We have to stop feeling sorry for ourselves as Christians and realize that there is no better place to be, no better job to have than that of being in the Father's house – to be called His child, His servant. What a privilege!
- VIII. THERE IS FORGIVENESS IN THE FATHER'S HOUSE – 15:20-24.
- A. Notice the text – the son returns – the father saw him from a long way off, as if every day he peered down the road hoping to see his son's silhouette on the horizon.
  - B. The father ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. Here we see the compassion and open arms of the heavenly Father toward one who would repent.
  - C. The prodigal son began his speech only to be interrupted by his father giving instruction to his servants to get things ready for his lost son's return.
  - D. The heavenly Father is always hoping that his child will return. God forgives and forgets. HE 8:12.

- E. Notice that in the parable the servants understood the father's forgiveness – v. 27, and that they shared in the celebration of the son's return. That should be our attitude. EP 4:32.

#### CONCLUSION

- A. The young man who set out to find happiness and freedom in a far country discovered true joy and genuine freedom can only be found in the Father's house.
- B. The only one in the whole house who was not full of joy was the older brother. He could not comprehend how his father could reward someone who had wasted so much. 15:30.
- C. God's grace necessitates our repentance and obedience unto the heavenly Father. We rely upon God's mercy to forgive the unforgivable and His grace that gives some more. EP 1:7, 8, 18.
- D. We have a Father who stands waiting for us to return even when we have rejected Him. We have a Father who's deepest and greatest joy is to receive us back home to grant us more blessings than we could ever imagine.
- E. Who could refuse a Father like that?

(Taken from an article by Norm Webb Jr. – He took thoughts from the articles by Chuck Durham and Shane Scott)