

The Father's Heart

Introduction

There isn't a single passage of Scripture that better illustrates the heart of our heavenly Father than the parable of the prodigal son. This week Pastor Wendell took us through the story outlined in Luke 15:11-32. Jesus told this parable after He heard some Pharisees and scribes grumbling about His eating with "sinners" (Luke 15:1-2). Remember that the religious leaders of Jesus' day, while they might have acknowledged that they sinned from time to time, they did not view themselves as "sinners." That was a category that, in their mind, was applied to those who were "worse" than they were - tax collectors, prostitutes, and others. These sinners, according to the Pharisees and scribes, were beyond the reach of God's grace. They were so corrupt that no truly holy person could eat with them and escape defilement.

Of course, the views of the Pharisees were very wrong, especially their belief that the most notorious sinners could never find a restored relationship with God. The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, which precede the parable of the prodigal son, point us toward the conclusion that heaven takes great joy in extending grace to the worst of sinners. When that which was lost has been found, a celebration follows, and this is particularly true when lost men and women, who are made in the image and likeness of God receive the Lord's grace and return to Him.

The life-changing core of the gospel is that even when we feel far from God, He is never far from us. The moment we turn back toward Him, He runs out to meet us. The moment we lower ourselves in response to our sin, He exalts us, calls us His child, and throws a party in our honor. Romans 8:38-39 says it best. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Get lost today in the profound grace of your loving God. Of no work of your own, you have been set free from the bonds of this earth and brought back into the embrace of your loving heavenly Father. What a blessing! What a privilege!

Take time today to simply rest in the foundational truth of the gospel. Run toward God with all humility and allow your heart to be raised up as He exalts you. Humble yourself before Him and allow Him to pour joy over you like you have never felt before. God has every reason to condemn you, but out of His overwhelming love, He has chosen to call



you His beloved child. Meditate on this life-changing truth and respond to His love with the offering of your life.

Getting Started

Read Luke 15:11-32; Romans 8:31-39

1. Look up the word prodigal. What does it mean?
2. What is the significance of the son taking a job caring for the pigs of a citizen in a foreign country?
3. What had to happen for the son to come to his senses?
4. What is the significance of the Father running towards the son?

Let's Get Personal

1. Evaluate your own life. In what area do you need to turn and run toward your heavenly Father? Write it down. When you acknowledge your total need of His grace, you can receive the abundant mercy He is waiting to pour over you.
2. Spend 15 minutes meditating on the profound truth of the gospel that you are fully loved only through the grace of your heavenly Father. Use the following verses for inspiration, Ephesians 2:8; John 1:12; Malachi 3:17

Take The Next Step

Throughout the week, spend 10 minutes each day basking in the knowledge of God's love. Use the time to listen to worship music, pray or journal. Deliberately consider His love, reminisce about the miracles that He has performed on your behalf.

