

Luke 15: 11-24; “The Parable of the Prodigal Son”, Session # 1 – “The Prodigal Son’s Selfishness”, Presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 14th, 2024, in the Adult Sunday School.

I. Introduction: Who do the People in this Parable represent?

To begin with, I think that it will be good if I can introduce this parable to you by trying to come to terms with who is being spoken of, and referred to, in it; the three persons mentioned: The Father and the elder and younger sons. We must remember that the scope of all 3 of these parables in Luke 15 is referring back to Jesus’ being complained against by the Pharisees and the scribes in verse 2. What were they complaining about? They were complaining about Jesus receiving sinners and eating with them. Jesus, in all three of these parables, is addressing these complaints.

In the first of these Parables, Jesus made an appeal to the Pharisees and scribes, asking the question – Which of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and will go after the one which is lost until he finds it? They would have done it, if this lost sheep belonged to them. We saw that the 99 sheep who “needed no repentance” who are mentioned in verse 7, actually did belong to them. They were actually the disciples of these men, and they had been deceived into thinking that because they were Jews, that they were automatically saved people, people approved by God, because of their sacramental and ceremonial works.

And therefore, they didn’t think that they needed any repentance and faith in Jesus Christ because their mentors and teachers, these Pharisees and scribes told them that they were “safe” supposedly, because of a sacramental/ceremonial righteousness coming to them by their observance of the law. These men who Jesus was talking to, didn’t think that they needed to repent and believe in Christ. And so Christ shows the Pharisees and scribes in these 3 Parables their great need of repenting of their sins, and being saved by faith in Him. Jesus, during the days of His public ministry, often talked with sinners and tax-collectors so that they would come to know that salvation was by faith in Him alone. Salvation was not by the works of the law.

In this Parable, Jesus is going to draw a real contrast between the younger son and the older son of this gracious, loving, and generous father. Jesus was showing them that this father cared so very much for their welfare, both temporal and eternal. The younger son, whose life we will be studying today, represents those who do not value God and all that He does for them. They just want to live for themselves and take everything that the Father gives them, and spend it on their own selfish and sinful interests. But this younger son of the Parable comes to know himself to be a sinner because of his failures to do what is right, and his suffering the consequences of his bad choices.

We will see that he did initially not love his father enough to appreciate all that he had done for him. But, by grace, he would learn to love him, and be thankful for his being taught these lessons related to his need to be saved from all of his sins. So who does the father in this parable represent? He represents God the Father, the Father of all Mankind by creation. But as we shall see, the Father is only really a Father spiritually and savingly, to those who will repent of their sins and believe in the gospel of Christ. He is a loving heavenly Father, and He is good to all Mankind. But He also has the expectation that each of us will seek to know His ways, and walk in His truth, whether we are a Jew or a Gentile.

In the first Parable we learned of Christ’s seeking of lost sinners. In the second Parable we learned of the Woman, Christ’s Church, seeking lost sinners. In this Parable we learn of the great need for all mankind themselves to come to seek to understand how gracious and loving and good God the Father is, and to return to Him. All men are sinners, and so all men need to return to God, either from the Far Country as the Prodigal did, or from self-righteousness and self-justification as these Pharisees and scribes needed to, but in many cases, did not. The older son

in this Parable well represents the Pharisees and the scribes, men who thought that because they had kept the Father's commands, were justified. But we will find that this was not true. The younger son represents the tax-collectors and other sinners who were being received by the Lord Jesus. Many of them had been prodigal sons.

II. The Prodigal's Sinful Selfishness.

A. Father "Give Me"

Verse 12 – "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me." "So he divided to them his livelihood."

Question # 1 – With what kind of a spirit was this statement made to his father?

Answer: With a demanding spirit.

Question # 2 – Is there any real reason for us as God's children to come to Him with this kind of spirit?

Answer: No, because He is the Author of our life, and He gives us all things freely out of His loving care and bountiful graciousness, all the things that we need and indeed all that we desire, if our desires are good and not sinful. God the Father (not excluding the Son and the Holy Spirit) is the One who has given us all the things that we have in this life.

B. God's Generous Kindness

Acts 17: 24-28 – "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands." "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things." "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"

Question # 3 – Why has God made men and determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, according to verse 27?

Answer: So that they should seek Him in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

Question # 4 – If in Him we live and move and have our being, and He is not far from us, is there any reason that we should seek to run away from Him to the far country of sin?

Answer: No, there is not reason to run away. Indeed there is every reason to stay and learn from Him, the good ways of faith and godliness. But sinful desires of the heart and the pull of the world will often prevail upon young men who do not know the Lord.

Luke 15: 12 – "So He divided to them his livelihood."

Question # 5 – Why do you think that the father divided to his sons his livelihood with them? It seems like an unwise think for him to have done. And how does this picture God the Father’s letting us go off to be sinful prodigals if that is what we think we want to do?

Answer: He divided his livelihood between them because he was a kind and loving and generous father, truly wanting to give what was best to his children. This pictures the attitude of God the Father towards us as sinners. He knows whether we will be wise with what is given to us, or not. But He would have us to learn about sin and righteousness and what is wise and unwise, for ourselves. So He is willing to let us go off into the far country, but not without warning.

C. The Prodigal’s Great Temptation

James 1: 13-17 – “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil; nor does He Himself tempt anyone.” “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.” “Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” “Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.” “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Question # 6 – When a person is tempted to go off into the far country of sin and worldliness, is it God who is tempting them?

Answer: No, God cannot be tempted by evil and He Himself does not tempt any man.

Question # 7 – Then how did this younger son come to the place where he wanted to leave his father’s house and go far away on his father’s money, so that he could enjoy the world and fleshly pleasures?

Answer: His own sinful heart led him to seek for these pleasures and pursue these sins because he really thought that they would bring him the ultimate meaning and satisfaction in life.

Question # 8 – Is it possible for a sinful heart to conclude that there may be other gifts that the world could bring to us which would make us really happy? In order to come to the right conclusion what should we believe according to verse 17?

Answer: That every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Luke 15: 13 – “And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions (squandered his property) with prodigal living.”

Question # 9 – What does the word prodigal mean? And the word squandered?

Answer: Prodigal means wasteful. Squandered means to misspend something, especially money or time in a reckless and foolish manner.

Proverbs 17: 24 – “Wisdom is in the sight of him who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.”