



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Luke Sermon Series
Supports Session 2: Celebrate?
Sermon Title: "The Father's Heart"
Passage: Luke 15:11-24

Connection to Luke 15

Luke 15:1-2 says, "All the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to him. And the Pharisees and scribes were complaining, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!'" In response to their complaint, Jesus told the religious leaders three successive parables to illustrate God's heart and desire for sinners.

Introduction/Opening

The parable of the prodigal son or what some call the parable of the waiting father is the third and most developed of the three parables Jesus told to illustrate God's heart and desire for sinners. Contrary to popular belief, the younger son is not the primary character in the story. The father is. And the actions of the father teach us about our heavenly Father's heart for sinners.

Outline

1. The Father longs for sinners to come to Him (v. 20).
 - a. Jesus set the stage for the parable by introducing the the main characters in verse 11: "a man had two sons." The father represents God, the older son represents the religious leaders, and the younger son represents those who were far away from God.
 - b. The younger son did the unthinkable; he asked for his share of the inheritance while his father was still living. Though legal, the request for inheritance while the father was living was considered a shameful act. The younger son was publicly breaking with his father, family, and community, and was stating, by his actions, that he believed his father was more valuable to him dead than alive. In that culture, the act was considered an unforgivable offense and the community would have considered the son dead (v. 24)
 - c. After the son left home and wasted his inheritance, he came to his senses and decided to return home. While the son was still a long way off, the father saw him. That the father was even looking for the son indicates his desire for the son to come home, regardless of how much the son had shamed him. In the same way, the heavenly Father longs for all sinners to come to Him, regardless of how far they have wandered from Him (1 Tim. 2:1-6)
2. The Father graciously receives sinners who come to Him (v. 20).
 - a. The younger son's return was somewhat dependent upon his action. Obviously, the only way for him to go home was for him to get up and go home! But it was completely dependent upon the father's gracious willingness to accept him. If the father didn't want

him, he couldn't return. Everything hinged upon the father's grace. It didn't take long for the son to experience the grace of the father.

- b. The father demonstrated grace by running to his son, embracing, and kissing him. It was considered inappropriate and shameful for an adult male of status and means to run. Because the younger son had humiliated the father and the community, he was at risk of being shunned, ridiculed, and even attacked by members of the community. The father endured the shame to ensure that the son wouldn't experience it. The embrace and kiss were signs of forgiveness. In Middle Eastern societies, disputes were publicly settled through ceremonies that involved the offended party embracing and kissing the offending party. In the same way, the Lord faced the humiliation of sinners (Isa. 53:6) and graciously offers forgiveness to all.

3. The Father redemptively receives sinners who come to Him (vv. 21-24).

- a. By the custom of the day, if the father decided to receive the son, it would be as a slave. That was what the community expected. That is what the son expected. What the father did was shocking and unexpected. He restored the son to his former position as a son.
- b. The father also gave the son gifts that publicly signified his status as a full member of the family. A robe, a ring, and especially sandals all signified status and honor. The son wasn't a slave tending to the needs of the family. He had been forgiven and brought back into the family.

Conclusion

A husband and wife had four sons and obviously loved each of them. To express the depth of his love for each equally, the father told each that he is the favorite, but with a twist. To the oldest he would say, "You are my favorite oldest son," but of course he was the only oldest son. To the second he would say, "You are my favorite son named Caleb," because he was the only son named Caleb. To the third son he would say, "You are my favorite son who played soccer," and yes, he was the only son who played soccer. And to his fourth son he would, "You are my favorite son in college," because he was the only one still in college. The point was simple, but important: the father loved all the sons equally and each was his favorite. Certainly God's heart isn't partial or biased, for He loved the world in this way—that He gave His Son for all!

Michael Priest lives in Memphis where he has served as pastor of Bartlett Baptist Church for the last 18 years. He has been married to the former Carolyn Leone for 35 years, and they have 4 adult sons, Jonathan, Caleb, David, and Matthew, 2 daughters-in-law, Alex and Rachel, and 1 granddaughter, Cylah. He earned his Bachelor of Arts from Blue Mountain College and both his Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is an avid rock and mountain climber.

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