



Luke Chapter 15

- Parable of the Shepherd and the Lost Sheep
 - Parable of the Woman and the Lost Coin
 - Parable of the Father and the Lost Son
 - **The Older Son**
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- All are mirrors of each other
 - Context is everything

The Parable of the Lost Son – Part 2

¹¹ And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

The Parable of the Lost Son – Part 2

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’” ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

The Parable of the Lost Son – Part 2

²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

The Parable of the Lost Son – Part 2

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

The Parable of the Lost Son – Part 2

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Audience – Verse 1

Tax Collectors and Sinners

- Outcasts and sell-outs
- Society Low-Lifes

Pharisees

- Strictly adherent to the law and condemned those who didn't
- Tradition around the Law was hugely important

The Older Son's Response

- The first half of the story is the one we identify with

Here's the problem

- The father no longer technically owns the estate... he divided it
- He can take what he needs to live... that's all
- We noted a problem in the first half where the older brother failed to mediate

The Older Son's Response

- The typical village had the wealthiest people at the centre with decreasing social status as you moved to the outskirts.
- The fields surrounded the village.
- The workers went out into the fields during the day and returned in the evening.
- The road to the village would have passed through the fields into the village.
- Thus, in both sections of the parable, a son is returning from a field to the father's house.

The Older Son's Response

- The wealthy houses in these villages were walled in enclosures with an large courtyard in the middle.
- The celebration is loud and boisterous.
- As the son approaches the village, it is highly likely that he would begin to rush to see what the celebration was about.
- Upon entering the house he would be greeted by cheers of welcome and be informed of the good news.
- His role, possibly after changing clothes, would be to mingle among the guests and make everyone feel at home.

The Older Son's Response

- Instead, the older son finds a young boy (*paidos*) and inquires what is happening.
- The word *paidos* can mean either servant, young boy, or son. "Son" doesn't fit here.
- The boy responds "your father did so and so" instead of "my master did so and so" which means he almost certainly was not a servant.
- Children were not allowed into the house for such events so this boy would probably be one of the children playing in the courtyard.
- The servants would be occupied with serving at the celebration.

The Older Son's Response

- There are a couple of important subtleties in this passage.
- The phrase “your brother has come” does not accurately convey the meaning here. The Greek is not passive in receiving his son.
- The connotation is that the father is the one who was active in “bringing him back.”
- The Greek word translated here as “safe and sound” is the same one used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for the Hebrew word *shalom*. It means wellness, prosperity, peace and right relationships.
- The father, of his own action, has achieved *shalom* with his youngest son.

The Older Son's Response

- Older children tend to be more serious and responsible
- Strong sense of right and wrong – legalistic – self-righteous
- Often very judgemental – sometimes with good reason
- He is disgusted that his father welcomes home his wayward brother
- This behaviour of this son is actually more cutting than the behaviour of the youngest son at the beginning of the story. That disrespect was done in private.

The Response of the Father

- The oldest son has now embarrassed his father in front of the whole community. A traditional father would have called his servants to subdue his son and have him locked in a room.
- The father pleads with his elder son v28
- This is all happening in front of the whole community
- The father humiliates himself begging his elder son to join the celebrations
- This action is completely against culture!

Conflict with the Father

²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.

- Several points of disrespect
 - not addressing him correctly with the title “father.”
 - he says “I have been working like a slave for you.” Does this father exhibit anything remotely suggesting that he is a mean taskmaster?
 - Third, “Never disobeyed?” Really? Never? He is saying this in front of the community in the most disrespectful and disgraceful way he can.
 - His refusal to mediate between the father and the younger son
 - Clearly the son sees his relationship with his father as restrictive

Conflict with the Father

- The older son accuses his father of favouritism but there's more
- The older son technically controls the estate but cannot dispose of it the way he wants because his father is still around.
- His father and brother are at this banquet but apparently they do not count as part of "with my friends."
- He does not even see himself as part of the family.
- If his father were dead, he could throw parties whenever he wanted to and invite whomever he wanted to.
- In essence, just like the prodigal, the older brother wishes his father was dead and out of the way!

Conflict with the Father

30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!'

- “This son of yours” is the older brother’s expression of contempt for his brother by refusing to even acknowledge that he is his brother.
- But the accusation he makes, “devoured your property with prostitutes.”
- Jesus never said about the youngest son suggested anything about sleeping with prostitutes.
- The “wild living” merely connoted that he was financially reckless.
- How would the older son know anything about what his brother had done?

Conflict with the Father

30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’

- He knows the celebration will seal the new found shalom between the father, his brother, and the community.
- Sleeping with prostitutes would be bad enough but he was in a faraway place, which meant he would have been sleeping with *gentile prostitutes!*
- This is an insult that might provoke murder; intentionally inflammatory, viciously tries to destroy the shalom between the father and the younger son in front of the whole community.
- He knows if he can make such a fabrication stick, no father in the community would give their daughter in marriage to the younger brother.

Conflict with the Father

30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!

- He is outraged that his father will not enforce social custom.
- Furthermore, the oldest son misstates the point of the celebration.
- The celebration is not about the prodigal son.
- It is about the father's joy at having achieved shalom with his son!
- The older son can only see it as a competition between him and his brother.

Conflict with the Father

³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.'

- Despite the disrespect the father's response is staggering
- The word used for son in the story is "*huios*"
- Now the father calls him "*Teknon*" meaning Beloved Son
- The estate belongs to the oldest son
- The father is actually reminding him that all his "slaving" has actually been for himself.
- The older son is fearful of losing what he has a "right" to and the father assures him that nothing has changed.

Conflict with the Father

³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

- The father counters the older son's remark "this son of yours," saying "this brother of yours."
- He will not let the older son distance himself from the family and the relationship.
- Finally, in Greek, "he was lost and is found" emphasizes the father's action in "finding" him and restoring shalom.
- The father hopes that his self-deprecating love will draw his older son into the celebration as well, restoring shalom among all.

Is that the end?

- We would hope for a “happily ever after” but its not there
- Jesus leaves us hanging

LOST

Theological Implications for us

- *Sin*. The parable exhibits two types of sin. One is the sin of the law-breaker and the other sin of the law-keeper. Each centres on a broken relationship. One breaks that relationship while failing to fulfil the expectations of the family and society. The second breaks his relationship while fulfilling those same expectations.
- *Freedom*. God grants ultimate freedom to humankind, which is the freedom to reject His love. Humankind is free to choose its own way even if that way causes infinite pain to the loving heart of God.

Theological Implications for us

- *Repentance*. Two views of repentance are dramatically illustrated. The human view: earn your acceptance as a servant. God's view: accept the costly gift of being found as a son.
- *Grace*. A freely offered love that seeks and suffers in order to save.
- *Joy*. For the father, joy in finding. For the younger son, joy in being found and restored to community.
- *Fatherhood*. The image of God as a compassionate father is given its finest definition in all of Scripture. The definition includes the offer of costly love to law-breakers and to law-keepers.

Theological Implications for us

- *Sonship*. Each son returns to the father either defining (the older son) or intending to define (the prodigal) his relationship to the father as that of a servant before a master. The father *will not* accept this. He offers costly love to each, out of his determination to have sons responding to love rather than servants obeying commands.
- *Eschatology*. The messianic banquet has begun. All who accept the father's costly love are welcome as his guests. We still have a choice. Table fellowship with Jesus is an anticipated celebration of the messianic banquet of the end times.

Closing thought

- Which son do you identify with?
 - Trying to earn your salvation though works yet without relationship
 - Knowing you don't deserve anything and have no relationship
- Are you an outsider?
 - Not knowing that you can have relationship with the Father?