

God Is Calling the Prodigal Brother, Too

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet Sources)

Introduction:

- A. Luke 15:11-32 - This parable is designed to teach us that God loves sinners, even while they are mired in their sins, and He gives them the opportunity to come home anytime they are prepared to repent
 - 1. It also teaches us that God loves the self-righteous even when they are mired in their sins, and He gives them the opportunity to come home if they meet the conditions of repentance.
 - 2. He loves the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son; these are the most popular of His parables.
 - 3. But the reason He related these parables in the first place is for the lost self-righteous - Luke 15:1-3
 - 4. We love this parable because we tend to identify with the prodigal son. Not sure why this is the case, as most of us are here at home with God.
 - 5. While we would like to think of ourselves in the role of the impulsive, immature younger brother, we are more likely to be found in the role of the jealous, judgmental older brother
 - 6. Three preachers were discussing the Bible one day when the subject of the elder brother and his identity came up. They were trying to figure out who he was. One older preacher spoke up and said, "I know who he is. In fact, I saw him early this morning." The other ministers, eager to hear his response asked, "Who is he?" The wise old preacher said simply, "He is me!"
- B. This parable reminds us that this father had two sons, and both were lost.
 - 1. The younger son was lost in a far country.
 - 2. The elder brother was lost in the father's house.
 - 3. The younger son was a lost hedonist; he lived for pleasure.
 - 4. The elder brother was a lost moralist; he lived to maintain appearances.
- C. There are two ways to be lost:
 - 1. One way is to live for pleasure and sin. This is how the younger brother lived, and he was lost.
 - 2. The other way, is to try to keep all of the law and believe yourself good. This is how the elder brother lived, and he was lost too - 1John 1:8
 - 3. Like the Pharisees, many often equate being good with being saved.
- D. This parable is for everyone
 - 1. It is for those who are in the hog pen of sin, wanting to come home
 - 2. It is for those who are skeptical when prodigal sons come home.
 - 3. It for those who do not rejoice over the good that is being done in the local church because it isn't being done their way.
 - 4. It is for those who are like the elder brother.

I. HE WAS NOT RESPECTFUL

- A. Luke 15:11, 25

1. He was a leader - He is the elder brother, and under the Law of Moses he is entitled to a double portion and is looked to for legal and moral leadership by the extended family - Deut. 21:17.
 2. Since his younger brother has already received his part of the inheritance, everything that remains belongs to this brother.
- B. He was a laborer - He is in the fields busy doing his father's business.
1. While his younger brother has been off in the far country living it up, this young man stayed home and worked.
 2. Up until his brother's return, it seems that there is a good relationship between the father and the older son
 3. 1Sam. 16:7; Matt. 7:21-23; Jer. 17:10

II. HE WAS RESENTFUL

- A. Luke 15:25-28 - Several things seem evident about the older brother:
1. He did not love his younger brother. He did not go to search for him when he was lost, nor did he wait with his father for his younger brother's return, nor did he rejoice upon his return
 2. He did not truly love his father. He was disrespectful, resentful of the father's open love for the younger son, self-oriented and condescending. He may have been living at home and working hard, but he did not love his father or brother.
- B. His resentment was not hidden - When this brother hears why there is a celebration, he is angry and refuses to go in.
1. His father comes out to him and pleads with him to come in, and he reminds the father of his faithful service and complains that he has never been given a feast for what he has done.
 2. The elder brother would have known that the day of the prodigal brother's return was the greatest day in his father's life.
 3. Fatted calf was a great extravagance
 4. His refusal said, "I do not respect your headship of this family."
 5. On the day that the father was filled with joy over the return of the lost son, ironically he lost his older son.
 - a. The father went out and "entreated" this boy to come in to the feast. Entreat means "to come alongside of another to offer aid and comfort, to beg, to console, to comfort, to encourage." It is the same word that is translated "Comforter" in John 16:13
 6. Luke 15:29 - Note that the older brother did not want a feast to celebrate with his family; he wanted to celebrate with his friends
 7. Serving is douleou, the word for slavery
- C. I have witnessed this attitude over the years
1. Some don't rejoice when sinners are saved, because they no longer feel special - Jonah 4. Attention moves away from them
 2. They are concerned when the church grows, because they see their hold on power slipping away. Changes the social dynamic
- D. What was most telling about his attitude?

1. Luke 15:29 - "I never transgressed your commandment at any time"
What hubris!
 2. Luke 15:30 - "This son of yours" - Did you notice that at no time did he address him as father?
 - a. "I am so righteous that I have judged him unworthy to be my brother, and you have to earn the right to be my father."
 3. Luke 15:30 - Who told him this boy had spent his money on prostitutes? He hadn't talked to the father or to his brother, and the servant didn't tell him what the younger brother did.
- E. He did this while staying at home and working hard in his father's fields
1. It is not necessary to be a drunk, liar, thief, murderer, homosexual, or liberal to be lost.
 2. It is not necessary to be unfaithful in attendance to be in the far country spiritually - Ez. 36:25-28; 1John 1:9; Matt. 12:35.

III. HE WAS FOOLISHLY RESOLUTE

- A. He refused his father's plea
 1. The son won't call him father, but the father calls him son.
- B. He refused his father's promises
 1. The father praised him for his efforts and reminded him that everything was already his.
 2. The older son wanted what the father had, but he did not want the father, just like his younger brother.
- C. He refused his father's passion
 1. The father tells this boy that it was "right" (necessary) that they should have this celebration - Luke 15:4-7
 2. Instead of pouting, the older son should have been partying.
- D. In Luke 15, everyone is rejoicing, except the older son
 1. The shepherd is happy. His friends are happy. The woman is happy. Her friends are happy. The father is happy. The lost son is happy. The servants are happy. The residents of Heaven are happy. The only person who is miserable is the elder brother.
 2. He is miserable because he refuses to be happy. The feast is there; all he has to do is go in and enjoy it. Instead, he is standing out in the field filled with anger because he is not the center of attention and because he didn't get his way

Conclusion:

- A. Note that this is an open-ended parable. Did the elder brother ever come to the feast? Did he repent of his attitudes and embrace his restored brother?
- B. Unknown. Jesus may have left it that way for a reason. Every individual must write his or her own ending to this story.
 1. For Israel, the story ended badly. In their self-righteousness, they refused the Father and His will, they refused His Son who brought their redemption, and they refused the Gentiles that God invited home.
 2. How will this parable end for you? - 1John 1:5-10