

The Parables of Jesus #30
The Parable of the Lost Son - 2
Lessons from the Younger Son
(Lk. 15:11-20a)
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INTRODUCTION

A. Last week we studied the parable of the lost son in Lk 15

1. It was the third in a series of stories Jesus told in answer to criticism by scribes and Pharisees regarding his relationship with sinners and tax collectors
2. It is a story that illustrates the nature and character of God
3. It helps explain the ministry and purpose of Jesus

B. I said then that we would have a mini-series within the series on parables

1. It is such a rich story
2. Although it has a specific purpose, there is much in the story that applies to modern day spiritual concerns
3. So, we'll break it down a bit and look at the three characters separately

C. Today we'll look at the younger son

1. There is a lot to learn from this young man
2. He can help us learn what to avoid
3. He can help us learn how to change our bad choices and the bad results into better ones

I. THE YOUNGER SON'S MISPLACED PRIORITIES

A. He wanted an immediate inheritance (15:12)

1. Legally, this younger son would have received 1/3 of the father's estate and the older brother 2/3 -- but only when the father died
2. His request betrayed something about his relationship with his father
 - a. he belonged to his father by birth
 - b. he belonged to his father by legal and societal ties
 - c. he did not belong to his father in mind, heart or spirit
 - d. there is no evidence that he loved his father, or that he felt any significant relationship with him
3. His request betrayed something about the character of his life
 - a. he was totally focused on material, worldly possessions
 - b. he was selfish -- self-centered -- impatient -- unwise
4. His request put him in direct conflict with many of God's instructions
 - a. Mark 4:19
and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. (NKJ)
 - b. Luke 12:15
And He said to them, ""Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (NKJ)
 - c. 1 Tim 6:9-10
But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (NKJ)

B. He wanted immediate independence (15:12)

1. He was pleading the case of young adults of every generation
 - a. "it's my life, I should be able to live it however I want"
 - b. "I don't want anyone telling me what to do"
 - c. he wanted his own life, the freedom to choose his own direction

2. He did not believe he would ever be free while in his father's house
 - a. there's some truth to this -- the father is the head of the house
 - b. but he evidently consigned negatives to his father's rule
 - 1/ the father made demands he didn't want to accept
 - 2/ the father limited the amount and kind of freedom he wanted to enjoy
 - 3/ the father restricted pleasurable activities
 - 4/ the father disciplined him
 - 5/ he did not believe his father was fair or understood him
 - c. independence is one thing, but what this young man sought was actually rejection of his father and of his place in the family
3. The young man's problem is spoken of in several passages
 - a. Isa 46:12
Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted, who are far from righteousness: (NKJ)
 - b. Isa 48:4
Because I knew that you were obstinate, and your neck was an iron sinew, and your brow bronze, (NKJ)
 - c. Jer 32:33
And they have turned to Me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not listened to receive instruction. (NKJ)
 - d. Zech 7:11
But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. (NKJ)
 - e. 2 Pet 2:10
and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, (NKJ)

C. He wanted immediate gratification (15:13)

1. The young man soon wasted everything he had on riotous living
 - a. riotous, prodigal or wasteful living is described by a word that originally meant "incurable" or "hopelessly sick" (asotos, Kittel, Vol. 1, p 506)
 - b. it then led to the idea of a life of dissipation that ultimately destroys the person
 - c. though we do not know the specific activities the young man engaged in, it is not hard to imagine -- what we know as
 - 1/ drinking and/or drugs
 - 2/ sexual promiscuity
 - 3/ seeking one excitement and high after another
 - 4/ free of responsibility

2. Like many young people, his attitude was that life should be enjoyed, therefore whatever provides enjoyment is what one must obtain
 - a. it is the obvious outcome of self-centeredness
 - b. it is the obvious outcome of total independence
 - c. but it is a life that destroys
3. There are some other concerns that this young man never considered
 - a. Luke 12:19-20

And I will say to my soul, "'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (NKJ)
 - b. Gal 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NKJ)
 - c. 2 Pet 2:12-14

But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. (NKJ)

II. MAJOR CORRECTION BY THE YOUNGER SON

A. When his world crashed in around him, the younger son made some major corrections that doubtlessly changed his life for the better

1. This is one of the most important elements in the story
2. The idea that a rebellious, wanton son could ever return to his father is central to the entire parable

B. The younger son did three things that speak worlds about man's relationship with God

1. He came to himself (15:17)
 - a. remember the man possessed by the demon legion?
 - b. he was wild, out of control, self-destructive
 - c. when Jesus cast out the demon something happened to him
 - d. Luke 8:35
Then they went out to see what had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they were afraid. (NKJ)
 - e. one of the first things that must happen to a man to change his life is that he must regain his right mind
 - f. it's another way of saying that he finally began to see things in their true light
 - g. for perhaps the first time in his life, he began to think clearly about life, its meaning, and how it affected him
 - h. this is what many (young and old alike) need to do
2. He arose and came to his father
 - a. although he had earlier rejected his father, he did understand something vitally important -- his father could be trusted
 - b. while he had been unfaithful, his father was always faithful
 - c. this, again, is a wonderful illustration of faith -- the son believed and trusted in his father, then arose and returned to him
3. He repented and confessed his sin
 - a. modern man often discounts the significance of these two elements
 - b. repentance = the change of mind and heart that produces a change of life
 - c. confession = acknowledgement of wrong done, and an affirmation that one has learned from one's sin

C. The son was not concerned with what the father would now give to him

1. Earlier, he had made his demands, but now he seeks only mercy
2. Earlier he had rejected the father, but now he wants the acceptance that he knows love will provide
3. Earlier he was only interested in what his father could give him, but now he is only interested in his father

CONCLUSION

A. What happens to all those young people who fall into the same trap as the prodigal son?

1. Many are simply destroyed by life
2. Many never “come to themselves”
3. Many never return to the father
4. Some, however, learn that there is yet a chance for real life

B. Have you ever been in the prodigal’s shoes?

1. Have you rejected the Father?
2. Have you selfishly demanded to live life your own way?
3. Have you wasted yourself in a lifestyle that only destroys?
4. Have you ever been at the end of your rope?

C. I’ve got good news for you

1. You have a Father who constantly waits, hoping for you to return
2. He is a Father of grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness
3. He waits to run to meet you if you will just turn back home

D. In essence, it’s the gospel story made possible by Jesus Christ

E. Invitation