

An Awesome Father

Preface

A stopped clock is right twice a day. But the rest of the day it is dead wrong.

One might think that life's most important question is "Do you believe in God?" But that is not the most important question. Many people believe in God but many people are dead wrong about God. A more important question would be "What kind of God do you believe in?"

If you believe in a god who orders his people to be terrorists and rewards them for killing innocent people, you believe in a false god. If you are a New-Ager and believe god is a force that exists in everything and everybody and therefore you can worship trees, crystals and even your body, you do not know the one and only God of the universe.

Jesus Christ came to earth to show us exactly what God is like. Jesus was sent to display the grace of God and to disclose the attributes of our loving Creator.

One of the ways Jesus educates us about our Heavenly Father is through the parables. In Luke 15, we find three such stories that paint a portrait of the character and nature of God.

Today we will look at the parable of the lost son.

Scripture

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have

sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So 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.'

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!'

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.'" Luke 15:11-32 NIV

Introduction

I have heard many sermons on the “Prodigal Son”. Many of the sermons focus on the rebellious son. Some of the sermons centered around the older brother who remained behind.

All of these sermons have been very biblical and made excellent points. But I believe this parable is not so much about the sons but about the father.

Looking at the sons, we can learn much about ourselves. The younger son’s actions remind us of the selfish rebellion of our youth. It reminds of a time in our life when we failed to appreciate the value of hard work and responsibility.

Perhaps all of us have a period in our life when we valued our own personal pleasure above everything else. No doubt when this young man’s money was plenty, he had lots of friends to help him squander it. But when the money ran out he found himself alone and at the point of desperation.

Today I want to remind you that when your actions are being persuaded by the crowd, you are foolish. When you begin to make decisions based on what you think is right without the influence of the crowd, you are beginning to show maturity. But when you make your decisions based on what God would have you do; it is then that you are truly being wise.

We can also relate to the older son’s feeling as well. Looking at the more responsible brother, we are reminded of our jealousy. We have all been at a point when we resented someone else getting recognition when clearly we were the one who deserved it.

Illus: I recall when friends painted the school and I was called to help clean it up, though I had nothing to do with it. Feeling like your loyalty has been overlooked is not a good feeling for sure.

But by far, this parable is about the father. It has been said that parables are “earthly stories with heavenly messages.” This parable is a story about an earthly father who teaches us about our Heavenly Father.

It is not enough to believe in a god. Each one of us must know the God of the universe and we must understand His nature.

So let’s look at some things we can learn about our Heavenly Father from the father in this parable.

1. He Allowed His Son’s Request

Each time I read this text, my first thought is that as a father I would not be so foolish. I reason that I would not have granted such a request to my son. But when I reflect upon my own actions of the past, I realize that is not the case.

We love our children and we desire for them to be happy. Even when we consider their requests foolish we usually give in.

No doubt the father in this story was wounded by the harsh demands of his son. Never the less, he granted his request.

The hardest thing to do is to let our children make their own decisions. God allows us to choose our way even when it disappoints him deeply.

Illus: I was recently speaking with a very nice elderly gentleman. He has just lost a lot of money trying to help a son-in-law in a business venture. He lamented that he made the same mistake with his daughter’s previous husband which was her 4th husband. Without thinking I said out loud; “You mean this was her 5th husband?” He said, “Yes and I should have known better but I just want my daughter to be happy.”

The Bible says we are made in God’s image. I believe our love for our children is one such area where we often reflect the nature of God. Like God, we allow our children to take our love for granted.

Strangely, God often allows our rebellion to take place. God tolerates all sorts of rebellious acts on our part including open defiance of Him.

God loves you so much he will not force you to stay in fellowship with him. God doesn’t force obedience and loyalty upon us.

God didn’t stop Adam and Eve just as God didn’t stop David from having sex with Bathsheba. If you are bound and determined to rebel, God will allow you to rebel.

God may allow you to rebel. But you must understand that you own your choices and you own the consequences.

2. He Never Stopped Loving His Son

As Jesus tells this parable, He leaves no room for doubt about the Father's love for his wayward son. The love that allowed this son to wander and seek his own way is the same love that sits and longs for the son's return home.

The parable tells us that the father saw the son coming down the road from afar off. You can bet the father was constantly glancing down that road, longing for the day when he spotted his son coming home. No doubt the days were long and the father was weary of his repeated watching and praying for the son's return down that dusty road.

Illus: I recall when my own son left home angry and rebellious. With a tender heart, I vividly recall the sleepless nights. I recall getting up during the night and going to sit on the front porch and weeping. I remember standing in the dining room staring out the window. I watched carefully every vehicle that came down the road hoping with all my heart that one of them would be my son. I missed him dearly. The days were empty and lonely. I worried about him and I longed to embrace him again.

Praise God my son has returned and we now have a great relationship and I see him daily. I look forward to my daughter returning from school and long for the day she settles back in Baldwin County. Just yesterday Pam and I drove an hour both ways just to spend two hours with her.

Today, people don't like to use words like "lost" and "sinner". That is a shame because it isn't until we understand that we are lost and we are a sinner, that we experience the depth of God's love for us; the meaning of repentance and coming home.

Make no mistake about it; though this father considered his son lost, he never stopped loving him. In this simple parable, Jesus tells us of God's unending love for us. God longs for us to return home to the cross and salvation.

Illus: You may recall the song children used to learn in church. Deep and wide, Deep and wide, There's a fountain flowing deep and wide. **God's love for us flows deep and wide for you and me.**

God never stops loving us.

3. He Celebrated His Son's Return

The parable is clear about the younger son's actions. He squandered his money on partying and prostitutes.

No doubt this young man had plenty of friends as long as his money lasted. But when the money ran out, he finds himself penny less and eating with the hogs. It isn't until we reach the point of desperation that we humbly realize it is time to go home and confess our sin.

When the son does return, the father doesn't say "You've made your bed, now lie in it." Instead he greets him with compassion and runs to him and kisses him.

Having his son return home was a cause for celebration. Without hesitation, the father calls for the best robe and to slaughter the fattened calf. It is time for a celebration!

Verse 32 reminds us that when we are lost it is as if we are dead. We are dead spiritually and we are out of fellowship with God. But when we return to our Father, we are alive, we are Found!

Our parable follows immediately after the words of Jesus in verse 10 which says, ¹⁰*In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

God's nature is that He is slow to anger and quick to bless.

When the son comes to his senses, he rehearsed what he would say to his father. He makes three statements, two right and one wrong. First he said, "I have sinned against heaven." That was right and so he confessed his sin before God.

Secondly he said he had sinned against his father and he asked for forgiveness. Right again. The son had sinned against his father and needed to request forgiveness.

But his final statement was, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son." On the surface that sound reasonable as the son felt he no longer deserved to be his father's son.

However, he never deserved to be his father's son. It was by grace that he was the son of a loving father to begin with.

In the same way, we are never worthy but we are the father's son or daughter by the father's grace.

Conclusion

I want you to notice verse 17 speaking of the son it says, "When he came to his senses..." The King James Translation says, "When he came to himself..."

Rebellion and rejection of our Lord is not the way we were made. We all need to come to our senses and return home to our Heavenly Father.

The God of the Bible is a loving God eager to welcome his rebellious children into his open arms. God is watching and waiting for your repentance and return home.

Other Lessons - Parable of The Lost Son Luke 15:11-32

If you are a parent and have a prodigal child, I would like to remind you of the following lessons I have learned from this parable and from my own experiences.

1. God understands your pain. God cares and He walks with you through those empty days. Lean on God and trust Him to get you through.
2. Don't jump in the pigpen to rescue them, you will only make matters worse. Our children must come to their own point of desperation. You cannot rescue them they must rescue themselves through repentance.
3. Let them know the door is open. Don't go to the pigpen to rescue them but don't slam the door either. Let them know a loving parent awaits their return with open arms.
4. Receive them with a celebration. Celebrate their return and restore them to their state as your loved child.