

Luke 15

Introduction (Review)

Most people like short stories

- Name some great short story writers: Mark Twain, Edgar Allen Poe, O'Henry
- What is the advantage of a short story over a novel? Less time, more compact
- Our Lord liked to tell parables (essentially short stories)
- What is the meaning of the word "parable"? To "lay alongside of" – a story that lays alongside of real life
- About how many parables did Jesus tell? Between 70 and 80, depending on how we define a parable

Luke 15.1-7

V1 – Who were the tax-gatherers? They held contracts with the Roman government to collect taxes in certain locations

- What was their reputation? Corrupt and aligned with the Roman Empire
- Why would the Pharisees be reluctant to associate with such people? They might get "contaminated" by these people
- Why were the tax collectors and the sinners attracted to Jesus? Because the Jewish leaders scorned them

V2 – Why did the scribes and Pharisees grumble? They didn't think it was proper for Jesus to associate with such people

V3 – Here are three parables to teach the Pharisees to accept all people who were searching for the truth

V4 – The Pharisees were probably familiar with this

- Shepherd? Jesus
- Lost sheep? Straying person

V5 – The shepherd carried the lost sheep on his shoulders back home

V6 – What reaction did the people have to finding the lost sheep? Great rejoicing and happiness

V7 – Do angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner? No, they rejoice over one sinner who repents

- The message of Jesus? He is calling the lost sheep (all who respond are acceptable to God)

Luke 15.8-10

V8 – This parable would appeal to women (the last one was probably for the men)

-**What did the woman lose?** A silver coin

-**What did she do in find it?** Lit a lamp, swept the floor, searched carefully for the coin

V 9 – The woman called in her friends for a celebration over finding the coin

V 10 – Message? Likewise there is joy in heaven over a sinner who repents and returns to God

Luke 15.11-24

-**The meaning of the word "prodigal"?** Wasteful (to throw away something valuable)

-**Three parts of this parable:**

1. Downward steps
2. Upward steps
3. The older brother

V 11 – What blessings did this young man have? He had a father and a brother (no mention of a mother)

-He was born into a family of some wealth (an estate)

V 12 – What did the prodigal son ask for (or demand)? That the family estate be divided up

-He used the word "me" twice in v 12

-That should tell us something about his thinking

-He was the center of his own little world ("I want what I want when I want it")

-**When is the family estate usually divided up?** When the parents die

-But he was in a hurry to get his money now

-The Jewish laws on inheritance (*Deut. 12.17*) said that the oldest son would get double what the other sons received

V 13 – How long did the son wait around after he got his money? Just a few days

-**Where did the prodigal son go?** Into a distant country

-**Why didn't Christ tell us which country?** Parables do not have specific names of any kind (to make them universal stories)

-Also it really didn't matter where he went – he just wanted to get away from his father

-**Why did he want to get away from his father?** He wanted to be "free" – he was tired of the rules of home

-Nobody was going to tell him what to do anymore

-He just wanted to be free in a faraway country

-**What did he start doing as soon as he got to that far country?** "*...squandered his estate with loose living*"

-Notice v 30 – The older brother said that the prodigal son had spent his money on prostitutes (probably correct)

-So drinking, committing fornication, taking drugs – he could do it all, and nobody

would stop him

V 14 – What happened next to the prodigal son? The money ran out

-**The message?** Sin is expensive

-Today, look at the prices on the windows of liquor stores; look at the price of cigarettes and nightclubs

-Most sins are very expensive

-**What else happened?** There was a famine that developed in the far country (things are not always as good as they look from a distance)

-So people want to be free, but they don't count on getting fired from work, or getting sick, or having to go through a tornado or hurricane and having the house destroyed or having to deal with a famine

-Then they need those people that they rebelled against

-**So what direction was his life going now?** Straight down

V 15 – What did he have to do? Get a job in the far country

-**What kind of job did he get?** Feeding the pigs

-**Why would this have been a great insult for the prodigal son?** He was probably a Jew, and pork was forbidden by the Law of Moses (an unclean food)

-**What do pigs eat?** Scraps, stuff from the compost bucket, corn cobs, apple cores, etc.

-**What did he get such a poor job?** Because he was a "foreigner" in the far country, and people could see how he had wasted his money

V 16 – How hungry did he get? He had to eat the scraps that were put out for the pigs!

-Now he had hit absolute rock bottom – out of money in a foreign country eating scraps put out for pigs

Luke 15.17-24 (The upward steps of the prodigal son)

V 17 – Don't you love this verse: "*He came to his senses*" – what a statement!

-**What was the only choice left for him?** To return to his father

-**What was he thinking about?** That the hired hands on his father's farm were better off than he was

V 18-19 – **What was his plan?** To go to his father and make a speech to him

-Notice that he rehearsed his speech carefully (v 18b-19)

-**What excuses could he have made?** No mother (maybe dead, maybe had deserted the family), poor schools, a mean older brother, other excuses, etc.

V 20 – We have to admire him – a lot of people can never admit they have made a mistake, and some know they have made a mistake, but never act on it, or they commit suicide (the coward's way out)

-But he started home!

-**What had his father been doing?** Watching for his return

-**What was the attitude of the father?** He had compassion for him and embraced

him and kissed him

-How was the prodigal son different from when he left home?

-When he left home, he had nice clothes

-He had money in his pocket

-He was on his way to freedom

-On returning, he was dressed in rags, no money, hungry, probably thin from the famine, no shoes

V 21 – What did the prodigal son do in this verse? Started giving his little speech

-What happened? The father interrupted him and didn't even let him finish the speech!

V 22-23 – What did the father order? New clothes, a ring for his finger, new shoes, food to be prepared, a great celebration

V 24 – Why was the father so full of joy? Because the lost son had come home

-Was the father an "I told you so"? No, he was just thrilled that the son had come back

-2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Lessons from the account of the prodigal son:

-Some people have to learn things the hard way (by experience)

-But God is always there to welcome us home (when we repent)

Luke 15.25-32

V 25 – Notice the background of this passage – Read Luke 15.1-2

-Who was represented by the older brother? The Pharisees and the scribes

-Did God love these people? Of course – The Jews were the chosen people of God in the Old Testament

V 26 – What did the older brother do? Asked about the singing and dancing

V 27 – What did the servants say to the older brother? His younger brother had returned and the fattened calf had been killed for a great feast

V 28 – What was the reaction of the older brother? He got mad

-What did the father do? He went out to talk with the older brother and pleaded with him

V 29 – What was the answer of the older brother? He had served the father for many years, he had never neglected a commandment of the father, and he had never had a feast given in his honor (really pouting!)

-Do you think that the older brother had always obeyed absolutely everything that the father had told him to do? No child ever does that

-So what was the real problem here? The arrogance of the older brother toward the

younger brother

V 30 – How did the older brother refer to his younger brother? *"This son of yours"*

-What charges did he bring against his younger brother? He had devoured the family wealth with prostitutes

-How did he know? Word gets around, doesn't it?

V 31-32 - What was the reaction of the father? He had always loved the older brother, but the prodigal son was dead and had now come back to life

-The lesson? The Pharisees thought they were so important to God that he owed them salvation

Great lessons from this parable:

1. We can never stray beyond God's love – no matter what we do, we can repent and return to God (if there is time)
2. We must confess our faults and resolve to do better
3. We must not become arrogant about all that we have done for the Lord

Song: God Is Calling the Prodigal (#179, Praise for the Lord)

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