

INTRODUCTION:

This evening, we will begin taking a look at New Testament parables...

- I would like us to take a look at a passage of scripture that I believe all of us are somewhat familiar with.
- If you will please turn in your Bibles to **Luke 15**.

Before we go to God's word and begin studying this parable, I would like to share with you a loose translation of the story. I think you will find this amusing:

Feeling footloose and frisky, a feather-brained fellow forced his father to fork over his farthings. Fast he flew to foreign fields and frittered his family's fortune.

Fleeced by his fellows in folly, facing famine, and feeling faintly fuzzy, he found himself a feed-flinger in a filthy foreign farmyard. Feeling frail and fairly famished, he filled his frame with foraged food from the fodder fragments.

"Fooley," he figured, "my father's flunkies fare far fancier," the frazzled fugitive fumed feverishly, facing the facts. Finally, frustrated from failure and filled with foreboding, he fled.

Faraway, the father focused on the fretful familiar form in the field and flew to him and fondly flung his forearms around the fatigued fugitive. Falling at his father's feet, the fugitive floundered forlornly, "Father, I have flunked and fruitlessly forfeited family favor."

Finally, the faithful Father, forbidding and forestalling further flinching, frantically flagged the flunkies to fetch forth the finest fatling and fix a feast.

Faithfully, the father's first-born was in a fertile field while father and fugitive were feeling festive. Frowning and finding fault, he found father and fumed, "He frittered family funds and you fix a feast for the fugitive?"

Frankly, the father felt the frigid first-born's frugality of forgiveness was formidable and frightful. But, the father's former faithful fortitude and fearless forbearance to forgive both fugitive and first-born flourished. Unfurl the flags and finery, let fun and frolic freely flow. Former failure is forgotten, folly is forsaken.

The door of life is some times referred to as the ever revolving door.

- The door of life is constantly changes and we are constantly entering new phases.
- At this congregation, we have some recent graduates who are no longer high schoolers and are beginning to pursue their careers.
- Others are on the brink of retirement and are looking forward to possibly having a little more free time.
- Yet others have entered into the phase of life known as parenthood

As we age and as we experience these phases of life, we are able to reflect back on these experiences.

- What is amazing to me is how much our perspective changes from one phase of life to the next!
- Isn't it ironic that as children, we look forward to being an adult when we can make all of our own choices?
- And as adults we look back and wish we could be carefree and without all of the responsibilities like the children? Isn't it true that... **"It always looks greener on the other side of the fence."**

This evening, I would like us to examine a passage of scripture that speaks of a young man who was at this stage when he thought that he could make an improvement in his life by leaving home, taking his inheritance, and abandoning his father and older brother.

- This parable is one of three stories in **Luke 15** that is being told by Jesus and that shows the incredible value of lost souls.
- There are two common threads that tie together the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son.
- All three parables involve the fact that something has been lost and when it has been found, there is great rejoicing.
- However, the one thing that sets the prodigal son apart is that he makes a series of choices that causes him to be lost. He brought the end results upon himself and if he had made better choices, he would not have been in the predicament that he was in.

As we read the story beginning at the 11th verse of **Luke 15**, I would like to urge you to consider that there are not only different phases of life that require us to make decisions, but there are also several stages of actions that need to be made when it comes to our sinfulness. Let us read **Luke 15:11-24**.

11 And He said, "A man had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. 13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. 14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. 15 "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. 17 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" 20 "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

The men in this story take a number of different actions that I would like for us to consider.

I. The first action we see from the son is REBELLION:

When I think of the word Rebellion, I immediately think of that stage of childhood right before they become adults.

- Sorry Teens! However, everyone in this auditorium knows what I am talking about.
- It is that stage where a person begins wearing the “bad boy” or “bad girl” clothing.
- Black tee shirts and black pants, weird hair colors, tattoos, multiple ear pierces or body pierces.
- Language and speech patterns that, frankly, even embarrass the parents...
- These are all outward signs of rebellion. They are a public display of a person who is telling their parents that they make their own decisions now and “**Mom and dad can’t tell me how to run my life.**”
- “**I am going to do my own thing and make my own mistakes just to spite my parents knowing that they won’t approve of my actions.**”
- This stage of rebellion involves pushing the limits.
- It is blatant disobedience an open showing that they are not afraid of punishment.

The younger son here in **Luke 15** said, “*Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.*”

- Notice he didn’t say “please” or “thank you.” He said, “*give me...*”
- This transaction between a father and a son sounds like it was very disrespectful and callous toward the father who had apparently raised him up from a child.
- At this point in life, the father had given him all things and he owed his very life to him.

- But instead, he was rebellious and he asked for the inheritance and shortly later, he went to a distant country and wasted his money on a very sinful lifestyle.

It is not recorded in this passage, but I am certain that the father gave sound advice to this son and tried talking him out of these bad decisions.

- I am sure that the father let the son know that he loves him and wants him to make the right decisions.
- I would guess that the father would have liked him to remain with him working the family business.
- **“Please son, think about your decision. Don’t be so irrational. Stay with me and help your older brother work on the East fence that needs mending. You have responsibilities here.”**
- Or how about this one, **“Don’t do anything that you are going to regret later in life.”**
- How many times have we heard that one?
- Perhaps the Bible doesn’t record the father putting up a fuss, because he already knows that it wouldn’t do any good to hound his son. His mind is already made up. Ultimately, the son made his own choices...

Let’s take a moment to consider our choices... When we sin, aren’t we really just displaying another form of rebellion?

- Isn’t it true that we like to push the limits and just see how much we can get away with?
- Isn’t it true that we simply disregard the good sound advice that is given to us by our heavenly Father?
- What kind of outward displays of rebellion are you showing? Dressing or speaking inappropriately? Forsaking the assembly? Are you involved in morally unacceptable circumstances?
- Do you have a secret sin that you would be ashamed to tell anyone you are involved in?
- When we sin, we are disregarding God’s authority and not fearing his punishment.
- We are being disrespectful and callous toward the Father who has given us all things and who we owe our very lives to.

I have heard it said that when we sin, we are crucifying Jesus.

- Every sin that we commit represents one lash of the whip that left wounds on His body.
- Each act of disobedience to Him is a swing of the hammer that pounded the nails into His hands and His feet.
- All acts of rebellion to God the Father are blows to Christ the Son, who took those blows in our stead.

When we turn our back on the Bible for sinful living, we are abandoning the Father.

- Just like the youngest son in this parable
- He made the decision to live in sinfulness.
- **Verse 13** says that it was days between the time he received the inheritance to the time that he left for the distant country.
- This tells me it was something he had thought about and considered for some time and ultimately he chose rebellion.

A second action that the son ultimately made...

II. Was action of being REPENTANCE.

After all of the money had been blown on **“loose living”**, there was a severe famine in the country and the job market apparently was so good.

- The only job he could find was that of a pig feeder. This job apparently didn’t pay much because he couldn’t afford to buy good food. He found himself desiring the food that the pigs were eating.
- Another thing that we notice in the end of **verse 16** is that, **“no one was giving anything to him.”**
- Have you ever noticed that the person that doesn’t make very wise life choices is generally the one that people feel less generous toward? **“You made your bed, now lie in it.”**

Eventually though the son wised up... knowing he had made some bad choices.

- **Verse 17** says, **“But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!’”**

- It doesn't appear that he went running to his dad the minute the money was gone. It seems as though there was a period of time that it took for the famine to really take its toll on the son.
- Instead of admitting his mistakes and running back to his dad, he chose to endure his hardship.
- He must have been pretty stubborn to put himself in that situation!
- His pride was keeping him from repentance and he did not want to have to "**face the music**" that his decision to go to this distant country was wrong.
- It isn't easy to admit our faults and to have to humble ourselves when we have done something stupid is it?

When we get involved in a sinful lifestyle, it is not easy to face those who witnessed our sins and admit that the things we were doing was wrong.

- And yet we know that humility is a very necessary part of coming to grips with our mistakes.
- Repentance is an acknowledgement that our actions have been wrong and it is an effort to change and take the right actions in the future.
- According to the dictionary, the definition of repentance comes in two parts. "**1) To feel regret for sinful actions taken. 2) To turn from the sinful actions.**"
- When someone feels bad for a sinful action, but then goes back and commits the same sinful action, it is not true repentance. They must also turn away from those actions.

The prodigal son physically turned away from the distant country and returned to his father.

- "**Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.**"
- He showed his regret by humbling himself.
- **Acts 3:19** says, "**Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;**"
- Repentance is necessary for a new beginning... it wipes away sin and allows for fresher and better times.

The father and the older son had two choices to make when the younger son returned. 1) They could react out of RESENTMENT like the older son. 2) Or they could react like the father and make RESTITUTION with him.

- Luckily for us, the father in this story represents our heavenly Father.

The first two actions (on the part of the son) were REBELLION and REPENTANCE....

III. A third action that is taken is when the father and son make RESTITUTION.

The son begged his father to simply take him back as a hired man, but the father was so happy to have him back that he went way above and beyond the son's expectations.

- In **verse 22** we read, "**But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;'**"
- Restitution is, "**an act of restoring or a condition of being restored.**"
- In other words, putting things back the way they were before.
- The father made the choice of welcoming his son back.
- He chose to forgive the son and he chose to restore him not as a servant, but as a son.

For restitution to be given, however, restitution must be sought.

- We have all heard it said, "**You can say that you are sorry, but until you show that you are sorry, I cannot forgive you.**"
- The son took action and was seeking to be restored as a servant with his father.
- He wanted to try to make things right with his dad and was willing to come back humbly in order to do so.

The word of God requires us to take action when we want to be restored to God...

- There is a specific action that He expects us to take that requires us to display humility.
- It is an action that demonstrates to others that we are committed.
- And it is an action that is specifically commanded by God inspired writers of the Bible in order for us to make restitution with Him.

- As many of you have probably figured out, the action that I am referring to is water baptism.
- Ananias commanded Paul to rise up and be baptized washing away his sins in **Acts 22**.
- Peter commanded a group of Gentiles to be baptized in **Acts 10:48** which says, *“And he ordered them to baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...”*
- When Jesus gave the “great commission” in the last few verses of the book of Matthew He commanded them, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”*

When we are baptized we are to confess Jesus as the Son of God, for the rest of our Christian lives we are also supposed to confess our sins.

- **1 John 1:9** speaking to Christians says, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* On the contrary, **verse 10** says, *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”*
- **James 5:16** also urges us to confess our sins to others, *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”*
- The way to make RESTITUTION is by being baptized and thus added into the Lord’s church.

IV. The fourth and final action in this story that I would like us to look at this evening is the action of REJOICING.

When the prodigal son came out of a stage of REBELLION and approached his dad with a humble and REPENTANT heart, he was seeking RESTITUTION.

- His father was sincerely happy to see his son was returning. **Verse 20** says, *“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”*
- He was overjoyed at even the sight of his son and he loved him dearly.
- The father was thrilled that the son had made the right decision and he said in **verse 23 & 24**, *“bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”*
- His father knew that his son had returned having recognized his mistakes and was coming out of his stage of rebellion, the father was so overjoyed that even in these days when there was a famine going on, he couldn’t help but to throw a celebration.
- This was an occasion worth REJOICING over!
- His son who was *“dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”*

SUMMARY:

The story of the prodigal son so plainly walks us through the plan of salvation.

1. The REBELLION that the prodigal son showed his father was just like our sins today. Every sin we commit is an act of rebellion and disobedience to God.
2. When we come to our senses, it is hard to admit that we have been wrong and it is hard to fess up and humble ourselves, however the Bible in this story, in **Acts 3:19** & other places, indicates that we need to REPENT.
3. We also need to make RESTITUTION with God in the same way that the son made things right with his father. The way this is done is through water baptism for the remission of our sins. This is commanded by Christ, by Peter, and by other gospel preachers in the Bible. And in **1 Peter 3:21** the Bible says, *“baptism now saves you.”*
4. The last action that we discussed was an action of REJOICING. In all three parables in **Luke 15**, there was great rejoicing when the lost has been found. Also in **Acts 8:39** after Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, the Bible says, *“the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing.”*

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

Living as a Christian is a beautiful thing in God's eyes. **Verse 10** of the very chapter that we have been studying this morning, shows us that even the angels in heaven are joyous over even one sinner who repents.

- The story of the prodigal son, makes it clear that God will welcome you home with open arms.

If you have been involved in sinful living or if you have never been baptized, I would like to encourage you to respond to the invitation this morning, won't you please come forward as we stand and sing...