

The Father's Extravagant Love

Luke 15:11-23

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¹¹ And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."'" ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

My message title this morning is "The Father's Extravagant Love".

Happy Father's Day! Dads are the some of the coolest people on earth.

In the United States, a majority of the people agree that the physical absence of the father in the home is the most significant issue facing Americans.

A fatherless home can have terrible consequences. For example, children without a dad at home are thirty-two times more likely to run away from home.

It is the authority of the parents that points us to the authority of God. Boundaries, accountability, discipline, respect and honor - all of these values are learned at home through the Word of God.

And this morning, we see a father and two sons. And the younger son, one day, decides that he wants no part of his father's world or authority. He wants an authority-free, accountability-free, boundary-free life. He wants to be his own authority. He wants to be reckless. He does not want to be even with this father. He has no idea what the future holds but he wants to live out the desires of his flesh, his body and mind. And he doesn't have money. But he knows his father does. He knows he could receive the rightful share of his property. Not when while his father was still alive. His share would be available only when his father passes on. But this man can't wait. He needs it to spend it on immediate self-gratification. So he goes to his father with a demand. A demand that is quite unbecoming of someone who lived in a Middle Eastern setting. What was his demand?

Father, Give me my share of the property. It's as if he was telling the father, "I don't care if you are still alive but give me what I would receive if you were dead already". And what does the poor father do?

Nothing is recorded about a discussion between the father and the son. It would be fair to assume they talked about why he needed his share while his father was alive. The father provided for his two sons. He had people to take care of the house. Maybe the son lied about why he needed it. We don't know but we know that when the son demanded his share and the father divided the property between the two sons. The phrase is rather touching. It's as if the father divided up his life between the two. The younger son then turned his share into cash.

Verse *thirteen*.

¹³ *Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.*

The younger son takes all he had and heads out into a far-away land. Guess what happens when you go away into a far away land? No strings attached. No one to watch over you. Cash in hand. You feel invincible. These days, digital technology has made it possible to go to a far away lands without even stepping out of your room. A device is all you need. You can visit strange places and before you know it, precious time is spent and your mind is destroyed.

So this man goes away from home and in the latter part of verse thirteen Jesus says "*there*". There, in that far away land, where no one could ever question him, he squandered his property. He scattered his money into reckless living. He spent it all on his pleasures. - forbidden, illicit pleasures that would break his father's heart.

But soon his money was over. He spent all the money he had from his father's property.

This is why I believe Christians must not gamble or buy lottery tickets. Because, they prey on the sinful cravings of the human heart. What if I had this money? Well, it's not yours to begin with. "*Wealth gained hastily will dwindle.*" Proverbs 13:11

So this man after spending all the money, he comes to find out the place he is living in has fallen on bad times. There's a famine. Scarcity of food. Verse *fifteen* tells the famine was strong or severe. So, what does this man do?

He hires himself to one of the locals to do work in a pig farm.

This man does something a Jewish man would never do. He hired himself to a foreigner. The phrase "hired himself" is like being "attached to" or "joined to" or "holding fast to". Jesus said in Matthew chapter nineteen verse five – "*A man shall his father and mother and hold fast to his wife*". Same phrase. This man, very likely is single. And this man un-attaches himself from this family who loves him and attaches himself to strangers. And the man who hires him sends him off to the pig farm. Nothing wrong with working in a pig farm if you are a Gentile but you see who is the original audience of this parable? Verse one and two tells tax-collectors, sinners, Pharisees and scribes. A very Jewish audience. Tax collectors were Jewish people who collected taxes from their own people on behalf of the Romans. The term *sinners* was probably used for Jews who did not follow the Law. The Pharisees and scribes cared about the law but had an unbalanced view of the Law. So the minute they hear pigs, that would have immediately offended their sensibilities. Jesus was a master teacher. And Jesus knew how to get their attention.

So this man in the parable hires himself to a pig farm. And there it gets really bad really quick.

He was *longing* to be *satisfied* with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one was gave him anything. (He wanted to be satisfied. Jesus said in Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*) This man spent all his money on un-righteous living. And now he longs to be satisfied to have some food. But no one gave him anything.

This man could have helped himself to pig's food but it appears that food was rationed as well. The word *gave* is actually an imperfect tense in verse sixteen. So it should read "no one was *giving* him anything".

Why was no one giving him anything? Jesus wants to contrast with what this man demanded of his father. While his father was still alive, he demanded property by saying, "Father, Give me". Now this man is in a pig farm. No money. No food. Famine and poverty all around

him. No one has any food to offer him even if had money to buy. He must have pleaded with the farm owner, “Sir, please give me food not your food but at least the food you feed your pigs”. But even the food for pigs was not available.

This man is hungry, dirty, penniless and desperate. He has hit rock bottom. It is at this moment, heaven speaks to his conscience.

Perhaps, the father was praying. The family was praying. You have a son, daughter or a family member that appears to be so lost and without hope, Jesus said we ought to pray and not lose heart.

Look at verse seventeen.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’”

But when he came to himself. This is what repentance looks like.

It is only when a man comes to his lowest point, when a man is humbled, all supports are gone, it is at that moment God’s grace is most active. Grace is not something you earn.

One sure sign that you are a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ is this. You remember a time when you came to yourself. Meaning you came to a point of desperation and you said to yourself? What in the world am I doing? Why am I wasting my time by feeding on pods of sin, on things that don’t satisfy? A man could come to himself out of necessity, out of desperation, out of want or need. Desperation can drive a man or woman to great lengths. But godly repentance is more than just being in need like hunger or thirst. Godly repentance comes from spiritual desperation and humility. It is knowing and acknowledging you have sinned against God and man.

And see what this man said to himself first.

But when he came to himself, he said, “how many hired servants of my father have more than enough bread, but I myself die here of hunger”. He brought this hunger and desperation on himself. I will myself rise up and go to my father and tell him, ‘Father, I sinned into heaven and before you’.”

So this man has a conversation with himself and heads home.

There are many sons and daughters who have rebelled. Some steal. Some get drunk. Some disrespect. Some get pregnant. And they perhaps live in shame. And they need place of acceptance. A son or daughter has messed up so badly and have no where else to go and want to return home. Can they come back home? Yes.

Let's see what this father does.

²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

Imagine what the son had been coming back from? He has wasted all his father's money. He is broke. He was dying of hunger. He reeks of the smell of pigs. He does not even have proper clothes or shoes on. But the father doesn't care.

What does the father do? The son had gone away to a far away country. Now he has come back. But the father seeing him still far away (this is a play on words), recognizes him and his heart melts in compassion and pity. The father then runs to his vagrant son.

Running like this, especially by fathers in a middle eastern country is very uncharacteristic. Then the father falls on his son's neck, embraces him. And the father doesn't stop there. He kisses his son. This is some extravagant love. The father knew that just by virtue of his return he had a change of heart.

After receiving such warm affection from the father, the son said to his father, "Father I sinned into heaven and before you, no longer I am worthy to be called your son". But before the son could finish his sentence, the father has something to say.

The father said to his servants. Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his finger, and put sandals on his feet.

And bring the fattened calf, make a sacrifice, and let us eat and celebrate.

Because this my son was dead and alive again, he was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate.

I have often wondered about Jesus and His Father's love for His Son. Jesus was not like this rebellious son. Jesus was perfectly obedient to His Father. But we were not. And yet Jesus tells his disciples in John chapter fifteen.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. John 15:9

You are a disciple of Jesus Christ because you have received extravagant love from the Father through his Son Jesus Christ. A love beyond measure. A love beyond comprehension. Israel was straying from God and God wanted them to come back to Him and He says in Hosea chapter eleven verse eight – “*My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.*” Hosea 11:8

And because the Lord has shown compassion, we ought to love another.

⁸ *Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

1 Peter 4:8

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: The Father's Extravagant Love. Luke 15:11-23

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What does this passage teach us about the relationship between repentance and God's compassion and love for us? Go around and share. Jonah 3:5-8, 4:10-11, Isaiah 55:6-7, Matthew 18:23-27

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

1. What ought to be our attitude towards those who wander and stray from God's way? James 5:19-20, Galatians 6:1, Jude 1:22-23
2. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

1. For personal reflection: In there anything that needs to change in your life to love others more?