

The Father's Joy

Luke 15:25-32

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²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

My message title this morning is “The Father’s Joy”.

Do you know that God rejoices over your repentance?

Today’s passage is about the necessity of joy. Our Lord Jesus Christ in his masterful teaching of this parable puts the spotlight on the older brother and his attitude towards his brother and his father. If the younger son is the immoralist who has returned home in repentance, the older son is the moralist who is prideful. The younger son’s life is indicative some tax collectors and the sinners – reprobate yet repentant. And the older son’s life is indicative of the Pharisees and scribes – principled and prideful but needing repentance. Broadly you could say there are two categories of people in the world or even in the church. One group like the younger prodigal son. The other group is like the older son. All people need the grace of God.

To give you a context about why Jesus teaches this parable, look at verses one, two and three of this chapter.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and

the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."³ So he told them this parable:

This is a response to the Pharisees for their grumbling.

In the first parable of the lost sheep, Jesus says that a man lost a sheep out of the hundred and when he found it, what does the man do? *"He lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'* Jesus tells the Pharisees *"I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents"*. He rejoices, calls his friends to rejoice and there is joy in heaven.

In the second parable on the lost coin, what does the woman do when she finds her lost coin? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, *'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'*¹⁰ *Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* The woman calls her friends to rejoice and heaven rejoices.

And in the third parable of the prodigal son, the father calls for a celebration when the younger son returned home. How big was the celebration?

A fattened calf. A full steak dinner with music and dancing. Verse twenty-five.

²⁵ *"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.*

Bible translators say music and dancing but a literal translation reads symphony and choruses. Imagine hosting a symphony party when someone becomes a believer. The father very likely hired a music band for the celebration.

And the older son was curious. And he is told the reason. Your brother has come back home and since your father received him safe and sound, he is throwing a party.

The older son is not like the younger son. The older stays at home with the father. Works in the farm. Obedient to the father. The older son is principled. And now after receiving news about his brother, how does he respond? Verse twenty-eight.

²⁸ *But he was angry and refused to go in.*

Not a word from this man that his younger brother had returned safe and sound. Instead, he gets angry and refuses to go in.

Jesus knows exactly how to speak to the heart of the issue. Spiritually speaking, the Pharisees were like older brothers to the tax collectors. And the tax collectors were hated by their own and used by the Romans to collect taxes from their brothers.

But some had repented and left their profession. Notably, Matthew and Zacchaeus and maybe others too.

The older brother, like the Pharisees and the scribes thought grace was too scandalous for people like the prodigal son or the tax collectors. Why? Because, by their moral high standards, they thought had a one up over the tax collectors and sinners. And in their high moralism they thought those who were not like them did not deserve such gracious treatment. They were principled and moral but they were filled with pride and contempt for people unlike them. In Luke eighteen, Jesus tells another parable to show us what the Pharisees thought about themselves. “God, *I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector*” Luke 18:10. Self exalting prayers.

So the older son is angry and refuses to join the brother. And the father comes out and entreats him. He pleads with him to come in. And he tells his father why he is really angry about. Verse twenty-nine and thirty.

His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

A few observations from this verse.

First observation: This man thinks obeying the father and following God’s commandments are a burden, a drudgery. Being a Christian is not a grueling, joyless burden. It is joyful

delight in the inner man. Paul knew of Christian contentment and he wrote in Romans 7:22 “*For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being*”.

Jesus said “*my yoke is easy and my burden is light*”. Matthew 11:28.

His commandments are not burdensome. 1 John 5:3

The true Christian, the adopted the son or daughter of God will say “Lord, my life has been blessed by the change you brought in my life, Lord what would you have me do? Use my heart, my hands, my feet, my resources, my treasure my whole being to glorify you.”

Job had seen a lot of suffering his life and yet he says in Job 23:12 “*I have not departed from the commandment of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my portion of food.*” Dear friend what do you treasure?

Second observation:

This older son expects a reward from his father.

This man misunderstands his role as a son. And this is such a strange reversal of roles.

Remember what the younger son said this to himself when he came to his senses? “*I will tell my father. I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants*”.

The younger son’s repentance was so real and true to the extent that he was ready to waive his right as a son just to be home.

This is what a humble and a grateful heart looks like.

On the other hand, the older son is now behaving like a hired servant.

This man is his father’s son and has all the rights of a beloved son. He belongs to his father’s home and yet he wants to be treated like a hired servant and even refuses to come inside the house.

This is what a prideful and joyless heart looks like.

Third observation:

Its only when he sees his brother being celebrated, he feels as if he is missing out on something. (*you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends*). The older son is not just angry and prideful but jealous of his brother. Notice in verse thirty the

older brother says, “this son of yours”. This is sinful pride speaking. Not brotherly love. He ought to have ran with this father to welcome his brother back in.

The older brother’s sin is at a different level. It is unseen unrepentant pride that had been simmering in him and rises up when his brother returned. This man is angry, jealous and complains and grumbles.

What does the father say in response? The father has the last word.
Verse thirty-one.

³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’

What a good word? Jesus said in John chapter eight twenty-nine “*And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him*”. Jesus rejoiced in doing His Father’s will.

The father then tells the older son the reason for the celebration.

The younger son lived recklessly giving into all kinds of sinful impulses. Squandering the property of the father. He was dead and lost in sin. But now he was alive. He was found.

Abundant grace and love was given to him when he repented.

This requires a celebration. It is fitting. Meaning it is necessary to celebrate and rejoice when a sinner repents. All heaven celebrates such repentance.

If you thought you kept the commandments by your own merit, let this parable be a reminder.

If you are tempted to be angry or jealous, think what God has given you. His own Son Jesus Christ. If he has given us His Son, will he not give us all things. And let gratitude flow out. If you tempted to grumble, turn that into thanksgiving. Into rejoicing.

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

MESSAGE SUMMARY: The Father's Joy. Luke 15:25-32

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

1. What does this parable teach us about the two sons and their heart towards their father and God? Compare and contrast. Jonah 4:1-3, 1 Samuel 18:8, Luke 5:30, Matthew 20:11, 14-16

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

1. Do you believe it necessary for you to be joyful in obeying the commandments of God? Psalm 19:8-10, 40:8, 119:35, 47, 72, 92, 97-104, Hebrews 8:10
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: Is there anything that needs to change in our life to find joy in the Lord and delight in his Word?