

Loving Father and His Two Lost Sons

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Date: 11 August 2019

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[0 : 0 0] Luke 15, verses 11 to 32. I will read out loud for us. And he said, There was a man who had two sons, 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. 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. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.

So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

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.

[1 : 1 7] I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 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. 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.

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.

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, and bring the fattened calf, and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.

For this, my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found. And they began to celebrate. Now, his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

[2 : 3 0] And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 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.

But he was angry, and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. 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.

And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad.

For this, your brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

- [3 : 49] Because apart from Christ, we are self-righteous, selfish human beings. We have all, at different points of our lives, held a grudge against someone.
- Maybe it's against a lazy, calculating co-worker that only works hard when the supervisor is looking. And when you get put in the same team for a project, he dumps all his work on you, and you finish it, but then afterward, he takes all the credit for it.
- And of course, lo and behold, when the time for promotion comes, he gets promoted, and you don't. You hold a grudge against that co-worker. You begrudge that person's success because you don't think he deserves it.
- Maybe you hold a grudge against a housemate that eats your food from your fridge and never does dishes or never vacuums the house, never takes out the garbage.
- And then you find out that this inconsiderate slob has started dating the guy that you had been fantasizing about. So you say to yourself, if only he knew what kind of a person this woman really is.
- [5 : 05] You begrudge that person's now successful relationship. Maybe it's your neighbor that has three kids upstairs and they're always rowdy.
- It seems when you're trying to sleep is when the kids are most alert and awake. They're jumping up and down and running up and down. It sounds like a war zone. And then you find out that they're pregnant with a fourth.
- And you think to yourself, they don't deserve to have another child. They can't even manage the ones they have. So you begrudge their success. Don't they already have enough?
- These people may be truly undeserving, but what all of these scenarios reveal is something that we hate to admit, that the begrudging spirit in us also reveals a profound selfishness, a self-righteousness within ourselves.
- This is the point that Jesus is making here in Luke chapter 15. To remind you of the backdrop to this parable, the Pharisees and the scribes who are the Jewish religious leaders, they are the moral cream of the crop in society.
- [6 : 23] And they begrudged the grace that Jesus was extending to sinners and tax collectors who were the moral scum of society. And recognizing this grudge, Jesus now addresses the Pharisees and the scribes.
- He teaches them using these three illustrations in chapter 15. This is the third and climactic parable in illustration. And his point is that we should partake in God's joy of seeking and saving the lost rather than begrudging his grace.
- That's his main point. And this parable is popularly called the prodigal son because it talks about a wastefully extravagant son.
- And that title goes back all the way to the 4th century. But the title itself is not inspired like the scripture. In fact, the focus of the parable is really on both sons, not just the younger son, the prodigal one, but also the older son.
- And really, the main focus, not even the sons, but the father, his heart, his love. So we'll examine this parable by looking at the major characters in the story.
- [7 : 34] First, we'll look at the licentious son, the lawless son. And then the lavish father. And then third, the legalistic son. So let's first look at the licentious son.
- He's the lawless one, libertine, spendthrift, wasteful son. And the parable begins unassumingly in verse 11. There was a man who had two sons. But it takes a sharp turn in verse 12.
- It says, And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me. The man had two sons. That means Jewish law stipulated that the older son, the firstborn, gets a double portion.

Which means the younger son is entitled to a third of all of his father's property. And so he's demanding his share of the inheritance, which is in and of itself is fine.

Son asking for, a father for money, of course, is not an uncommon thing. I mean, I'm sure some of you have asked your parents for money. It's not, but there's something, there's a little more sinister going on here.

[8 : 33] Because the younger son's request was really quite rude and impertinent. And in order to see why, we have to understand ancient Jewish property law. It was not uncommon in the ancient Near East for a father to give his son's legal right to his inheritance before his death.

The legal right to possess it. And it would belong to him. It's signed away to the son. But even in that case, the son would not have the right to dispose of the property. He would have the right to possess it legally, but not the right to dispose of it.

It doesn't come to him. It's not disposable until the father's death. It's similar in a way, maybe we think about life insurance nowadays. Imagine a father, a loving father who invests in life insurance and pours money into it every month.

So that after his death, his two sons have something to live on, something that they can use. That's legally, they're the sons. It belongs to them. But it does not become available to them until the father has passed.

That's when it becomes available for disposal. Now, so it's similar to that context. And with that in mind, look again at the son's request. Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.

[9 : 48] He's saying, give me now the share of property that is coming to me later. I know it's coming to me, but I don't want to wait for it.

So give it to me now. It's an unthinkable request because it amounts to telling the father, I wish you were dead already. I don't want you.

I want what is yours. I want my inheritance. You're living far too long. The presumption of that request is seen clearly in the way the father responds in verse 12.

It says that he divided his property between them. He actually grants this request. It shows his graciousness. And he says, he divided his property between the two sons.

And the word property here literally means life. That's the word that is used there. The father divided his life between them. He gave up his livelihood, the life earnings away to his sons.

[10 : 59] And the true intent of the younger son's demand is seen clearly in verse 13. Look with me. Verse 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.

His intention wasn't to, you know, get the inheritance now and then, you know, live and honor his father for the rest of his life and take care of him. No, that's not his intention. He doesn't lose any time.

Not many days later, then he's probably selling off stuff at less than what he can get for it because he's, you know, rushed to get out. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had.

That's the technical term used in a financial context like this. It means to convert all of your assets into cash. He's liquidating all his assets so that he could take it all with him and go. He's not trying to take the flock and herd with him to start a new business, a new life for himself.

He's getting rid of all of it to leave and get away from his father and his family. He's sick of home. He's sick of the family business. Sick of living on the family farm.

[12 : 09] Sick of his brother. Sick of his father. So he goes, journeys into a far country away from the concerned watching gaze of his father and he says that there he squandered his property in reckless living.

He takes his father's life, his livelihood and then he squanders. It literally means to scatter it, throw it into the wind. That's what he's doing. In reckless living, high living, this young man has expensive taste.

He's a high roller. He goes on a spending spree. He only thinks about the pleasures of life without thinking about their costs. Swiping left and right without checking his budget.

And later in verse 30, the older son says of him, the younger brother, that he devoured his property with prostitutes. Probably something he heard from one of the servants. So this younger son is licentious.

He's lawless. He's wasteful. He's immoral. The desire to get away and his desire to get away from the father is actually at the heart of every sin.

[13 : 29] If you're not yet a Christian, then you're living without reference to this true God. even if you live a relatively moral life, you have been living in prideful unbelief because you're living without reference to God.

You're living as if God didn't exist. You're doing exactly what this younger son wanted to do to live without the father. In cruder terms, your life is an expression of this younger son's unspoken wish.

I wish you were dead already so I could have what is yours. You're enjoying the gifts of God. Every good thing in your life, your family, love, a charming pet, delightful food, pleasing sounds and music, a stable job, your intellect, your health, the wonders of nature, these are all from God.

God. They're his good gifts and you're enjoying them all and yet you're enjoying the gifts without acknowledging the giver. You want what is God's but you don't want God himself.

That's the root of unbelief. And even for the Christian, the desire to get away from the father is at the heart of every sin. When we indulge our sinful desires, when we buy something we shouldn't buy or say something we shouldn't say or do something we shouldn't do, we are to varying degrees all saying this, God, living under your authority in your household is too restrictive.

[15 : 11] I want to have my own way. I want to get away from you. Sex outside of marriage is forbidden.

Marriage is only between one man and one woman. I should give my hard-earned money to the ministry of the church and the service of the poor.

I shouldn't get drunk on alcohol. I should consider others more significant than myself and look out for their interest instead of mine.

I should forgive the person that gravely wronged me. Oh, now you're asking for too much. That's too constrained.

I'm out. I can work under your authority in those other ways, but this, I gotta have my own way. Every act of sin is an act of rebellion against God and that's why it's so damaging to our relationship with God because it's actually in essence a vote of no confidence in God's ability to care for us and do what's good for us.

[16 : 24] We're doubting His goodness. We are questioning His fatherly care for us because we're believing essentially the same lie that Adam and Eve believed in the Garden of Eden because the serpent asked them in Genesis 3, 1.

Did God actually say you shall not eat any of the tree in the garden? You shall not eat of any tree in the garden? Has God really been that restrictive with you?

Has God really withheld that good thing from you? But those things are so good and they're so desirable God must not love you if He's withholding that from you.

dear brothers and sisters have you bought into the lie of the enemy? In what ways are you running away from God in pursuit of sin?

Do you doubt God's commands that they are good? That they are lovely? That they are beautiful? Do you think that you can create a better life for yourself apart from God?

[17 : 32] A desire to deviate from God's good plan and good will for us always reveals a defective view of God Himself. And it's because the younger son did not understand his father's love for him that he left him.

He did not believe that what the father offered him was his best what was best for him so he sought to find his own best life now to find out for himself what he had been missing out on.

And like all sinners the younger son soon realizes how miserable his life is apart from God. It says in verse 14 that when he had spent everything a severe famine arose in that country and he began to be in need.

He lived like there was no tomorrow so when tomorrow came with a severe famine he began to be in need. He has left the safety net of his family his community he has spent all of his money and now this young man begins to taste the bitter end of his sweet indulgence.

Did my mic just go up? I like it now. Sorry about that guys.

[18 : 57] I usually have help for all these things but summer we're missing a lot of people and the man usually who makes me check the battery is not here and so I forgot to check the battery and so this young man is now tasting the bitter fruit of his indulgence and now his poverty forces him to start behaving like an adult kind of like an adult and he seeks employment.

It says in verse 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. So he used to be this esteemed son of a wealthy respected landlord and now he is a hireling of one of the citizens of the far country.

He has been hired by a Gentile master and you can tell that this is a Gentile because he sent him into his fields to feed pigs. Jews considered pigs to be an unclean animal and for that reason you can see that this is really kind of a very demeaning dirty job for this Jewish son.

This is a it's kind of like there used to be a TV show that I've never seen but I've read about on the Discovery Channel called Dirty Jobs. You guys remember that? Yeah. So it's like I think the host is Mike Rowe.

He performs these difficult and usually disgusting jobs alongside the regular employees and some of those jobs included being a zoo cleaner or a roadkill collector.

[20 : 39] That might be the closest you can get to what this job would have been like for this younger son. It's repulsive to Jews who consider pigs unclean. It's demeaning.

It's lowly. Humiliating. But the younger son sinks even lower than that. It says in verse 16 that he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate and no one gave him anything.

Not only was he humiliated by the work he went hungry in spite of his work. He was tasked with feeding the pigs but no one else gave him something to eat. No one fed him.

He had sunk lower than the pigs. At least the pigs get to have their fill and so we don't know exactly what kind of pods that the pigs were eating but I imagine it wasn't very appetizing.

Yet as Proverbs 27 verse 7 says one who is full loathes honey but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet. We're picky eaters because we're full.

[21 : 39] Let's admit it. If you're really starving it all tastes good to us. To this starving younger son even pig slop looks delicious. And this is the sad condition and the ultimate experience of all sinners who are alienated from the Heavenly Father's care.

In our Father's house we are cared for we have the richest affairs to enjoy. We're treated as sons but out in the far country with a strange master we are reduced to slavery.

We're used but not loved not provided for. We are valued on the basis of our utility as servants and not on the basis of our identity as sons.

When we leave our Father's house we are all reduced to servitude to another master that the Bible calls the ruler of this world the prince of the power of the air Satan.

And this evil Lord makes grand promises but never delivers. It's always a bait and switch. The enticing pleasures of sin become less and less satisfying and we become more and more enslaved so that we long to be fed with the pods that the pigs eat.

[23 : 04] That's the reality of all rebellious sinners and that's the picture of the licentious son. In verse 17 the focus of the narrative begins to shift from the licentious son to the lavish father.

It says, but when he came to himself he said, how many of my father's higher servants have more than enough bread but I perish here with hunger. When the younger son comes to his senses he realizes that even the higher servants at his father's house have more than enough bread but he is here perishing with hunger.

And the word higher servant is not a reference to household servants that live in the property and have a permanent place in the family. These are references to the day laborers people that get hired on a day-to-day basis who have no job security and they get hired as needed.

Even these higher servants have plenty to eat in their father's house. They occupy the lowest rung of the social career ladder yet they have plenty to eat.

So son is here remembering the generosity of the father. Why am I slaving away here for this strange master in a far country that won't even feed me? My father is a better master and if I'm going to be a higher servant anyway I might as well be one under my father.

[24 : 28] At least he will feed me. So the son who was once sick of home and therefore moved away from home is now homesick. So he resolves to return home in verses 18 to 19.

He says, I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, 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 realizes how much shame he has brought to his father and not only that he acknowledges that he has sinned against God as well.

And he is not so shameless as to expect his father to take him back as a son into his family. He resolves to beg to him to treat him just as one of those day laborers, higher servants.

This is a helpful picture of repentance for us, for Christians. Because the younger son here realizes that he is no longer worthy to be called a son.

[25 : 27] He admits that he has forfeited all worthiness. He does not deserve to be received back into the family. The only thing that he brings back to his father is his debt and his shame.

The admission that he has sinned against God. Normally, a son that has so dishonored his father, in order to have any hope of being reconciled to his dad, would have to come bearing gifts.

But here, he has no gifts. Nothing but sin and shame. His only hope of acceptance by the father is the lavishness of the father.

The generosity, the grace of the father. This is a helpful picture of our own repentance before God. William Temple, who was the Archbishop of Canterbury from the 20th century, puts it this way.

He says, All is of God. The only thing of my very own to which I can contribute to my own redemption is the sin from which I need to be redeemed.

[26 : 30] That's all we bring to God. But even this younger son, who seems to understand something of the father's generosity, doesn't quite grasp how lavish the father really is.

It says in verse 20, He rose 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.

The word long in, long way off, is the same word that was translated as far in verse 13, into a far country. The repetition of the word reveals the father's heart.

The younger son left, took a journey to a far country on his own, disgracing the father and yet, his father has not disowned him. In fact, it seems that he has not despaired of finding him.

He had been looking out on the horizon for the sight of his returning son ever since. And one day, while the son is still far off, the father spots him.

[27 : 42] He wells up with compassion and he begins to run to embrace him and kiss him. And in doing so, this lavish father is breaking all ancient Near Eastern protocol.

Elderly Jewish men in this culture do not run. It was considered beneath their dignity to do so.

Because men in those days wore long, you know, flowing robes that limited their mobility. You can't squat, you can't really run, you can't kick anything. In order to run or do anything that's mildly, physically strenuous, they would have to roll up their robes.

If you have a girdle, a belt, you can gird up your loins. Especially the Bible uses sometimes. Otherwise, you just have to hold it like a skirt and run like this. It's embarrassing.

It's indecent exposure. It was considered beneath the dignity of an elderly gentleman to run. But in this moment, when he spots his son far away, his overflowing compassion overrules all cultural conventions and this father runs however clumsily can you imagine the sight of this son beholding his elderly father running to him this way?

[29 : 09] It must have been quiet and moving inside. And then when he arrives, the father embraces him and kisses him. The word embrace literally means to fall upon someone's neck.

It's not a polite, you know, respectful New England hug. It's a bear hug. You fall on someone's neck, you're chest to chest, you're face rubbing against their face and he kisses him affectionately, tenderly.

The younger son must have been filthy. This penniless pig feeder returning from a long journey and the father does not care before the son even says a word.

notice the son hasn't said anything. But just to see him start to return, the father already welcomes him and loves him.

And then in verse 21, the son finally works up the courage to say the lines that he had been rehearsing probably all along his journey. He says, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

[30 : 17] I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But before the son could finish his lines, before he could say the part about being treated as one of his hired servants, the father is already motioning to his servants in verses 22 to 23, Bring quickly the best robe, put it on him, put a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it.

Let us eat and celebrate. Taking his son back as a hired laborer is far from the father's mind. He doesn't berate this son about his wastefulness and foolishness.

He doesn't consign him to slavery until he can pay back the money. He doesn't nag him about all the things that he's done wrong. All that preoccupies this father in this moment is the joy of having his lost son back.

And so he reinstates the youngest son with all the privileges of sonship, putting on him the best robe, a symbol of status, giving to him a ring, which is likely a signet ring with the family seal representing his re-inclusion into the family membership and shoes for his feet to cover his dusty, blistered feet.

The younger son understands only then that his father will only take him back as a son. And as if that weren't enough, the father throws a party to celebrate the return of his son.

[31 : 53] They slaughter the fattened calf. The fattened calf. Meat was rare in first century Palestine and the fattened calf was saved for special occasions like major religious holidays.

The meat of a young calf, of course, is more tender than aged cow. And the fattened calf is one that has been intentionally pampered and fattened for to be slaughtered on special occasions like this.

It'd be enough to feed the entire village. The father spares no expenses. He lavishes his son with his love. Some of you in our church have a hard time relating to God as your heavenly father because you did not grow up with the loving earthly father.

But you have to rely not on how your earthly father represented our heavenly father. But you need to rely on how God's word reveals our heavenly father.

What scripture tells us about our loving heavenly father. And this is one of the most compelling pictures of our own heavenly father. When you feel like you've been a bad child of God when you feel burdened with guilt do you feel like you can't approach God?

[33 : 16] Do you think you need to cry a certain amount of tears feel a certain intensity of remorse before you can approach God again? Do you feel like you need to spend a certain number of hours or days in self-ordained exile just moaning grieving your sins before you can approach him again?

Do you think that you need to pay God back with all of your good works before you can be received back into his family? Our father is not looking you up and down in disgust or disdain or disappointment our God is a gracious God why do you think of him as such a hard man?

He is a loving father he's a merciful father he's a gracious father he's not asking you to spend days and months and years doing penance trying to pay him back before you return to him the moment you turn to return to him he is running toward you with compassion in his eyes there's no reason to delay our repentance we should run to him he's the first person we should run to when we feel that we have done wrong that's the heart of the lavish father and in this last section verses 25 to 30 we see a portrait of the second son the legalistic son it says in verses 25 to 26 now his older son was in the field and as he came and drew near to the house he heard music and dancing and he called one of his servants and asked what these things meant unlike the younger son who left his father's house this older son is still dutifully at home even though he did receive his share of the inheritance he stayed home to take care of his father but as he approaches the house returning home he hears music and dancing and he begins to wonder there's a party going on and I hadn't heard anything about it what in the world is going on so he calls out one of the servants and asks and his servant answers him in verse 27 your brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound the older son gets livid over this he was angry he says in verse 28 and refused to go in the father is joyful for his son's return the older son is angry about this party going on for his younger brother and interestingly the younger son that was formerly outside the house is now inside the house celebrating with his father and this older son that had always been inside the house now is sulking outside the house so that his father must come out to entreat him and the oldest son airs his grievances in verses 29 to 30 look these many ears

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 you who has devoured your property with prostitutes you killed a fattened calf for him doesn't that sound like a fair complaint haven't we all said something similar to God while this son of yours was squandering your wealth I was working hard at home building your wealth dad when this son of yours blatantly rebelled against you brought shame to your name I've been bringing honor to your name and yet you never even grilled hot dogs for me to celebrate have a barbecue with my friends and this son of yours comes and you're grilling filet mignons USDA prime beef what's going on dad where's justice where's fairness that's that's my fattened calf remember you gave him all of his inheritance it's all mine that you're parting with the relational strain is never more obvious than in the way this son addresses his father he doesn't address him as father which is a respectful thing to me he doesn't call him certain he says look and look at the way he refers to his younger brother he doesn't say my brother this son of yours he's distancing himself from the family disowning his relationship with this brother and this reaction of the older son shows that he was just as lost as the younger son the younger son said

I am no longer worthy to be called your son treat me as one of your hired servants and because he doesn't deserve to be called a son the younger son thought that his father might hire him as a servant instead the older son says look these many years I have served you and I never disobey your command he thinks he deserves to be called a son and only because he has served his father for many years neither of them understands the true nature of sonship neither of them understands the grace of the father both of them though in different ways have been operating like they have been servants the older son thinks unless he serves like a slave he can never get those good things out of his father he does not realize that he gets those inheritance those blessings simply because he is the son simply because he is the child of the father instead he thinks he has to earn it he thinks of it as a wage payment not a gift an inheritance so the younger son was licentious but the older son was legalistic the younger son represents the tax collectors and sinners that are coming to

[39 : 48] Jesus the older son represents the Pharisees and the scribes that are resenting and begrudging Jesus receiving these sinners and tax collectors they both had a view of God as someone who is stingy and strict the younger son type of people the tax collectors and sinners because they didn't think that what God had for them was good enough that to leave God and wanted to do everything that they want themselves to find that good for themselves the older son type of people the Pharisees and scribes because they don't believe God is good and generous because they think he's a stingy and strict God they feel like I need to pry these blessings out of God's fingers by obeying him observing all the law to the T force him to bless me that's why theologian Sinclair Ferguson writes in his book The Whole Christ that legalism and licentiousness are actually non-identical twins from the same womb you can't cure licentiousness with dosage of doses of legalism you can't cure legalism with doses of licentiousness do whatever you want live free

God loves you you can't live do whatever you want obey do everything everything God commands because in both ways we're not getting to the heart of the issue the heart of the issue is an erroneous view of God you don't see God rightly relate to God rightly as a loving generous lavish father only when you see God as he truly is as this lavish father who is eager to lavish on us all the good things that he has all he commands is good and beautiful and right only when we see God rightly do we obey him not reluctantly or dutifully but joyfully lovingly some of us tend to be more like the older brother than the younger one I think there's a lot of older brothers in Cambridge and this is true for

Christians as well as non Christians we begrudge the blessings that others enjoy because we feel that we deserve them more we think that God owes us something because we have been well behaved when in reality we owe God everything we look at others disdainfully in self righteous judgment keenly aware of their sins but obtuse to our own sins if that's you you need to hear the tender words of the father in verses 31 and 32 son you are always with me and all that is mine is yours it was fitting to celebrate and be glad for this your brother was dead and is alive he was lost and is found the older son refused to address his father as father but the father still addresses him as son and he reminds him that the older son that he referred to as this son of yours is actually this brother of yours and he reminds him that even though you complained

I never gave you a young go to celebrate with your friends in fact everything I have is yours I have given you my entire life can you see God's heart in this we like to kind of make fun of the Pharisees and the scribes and say oh man these legalistic self righteous people we don't want anything to do with people like that but do you see what God is doing with this parable God is entreating the Pharisees and the scribes Jesus is telling them join me in my mission to seek and save the lost rejoice with me don't stay outside the party I want you to be the part I want you to be a part of this celebration join me he's reaching out even to legalistic sinners self righteous sinners and we don't know how this older son responds this parable ends on the cliff hanger because it's an invitation to all the older brothers among us how will you respond will you begrudge

God's grace sinners or will you celebrate rejoice and join him on his mission to seek and save the lost this is a wonderful parable but the lavishness of the father comes with a cost that we need to account for because the father has to bear the shame and loss that this younger son has brought upon him likewise this elder brother has to bear the shame and loss that his younger brother has brought upon him after all all that is left of the father's inheritance is technically his and now he must share that with the younger brother that has come so there's a heavy cost to forgiveness reconciliation and this is where Jesus comes into the picture Romans 8 29 describes Jesus as the firstborn among many brothers he's the first who sets the pattern for all those whom

[45 : 29] God will save similarly Colossians 1 18 describes Jesus as the firstborn from the dead Jesus is the eternal son of God who always obeyed the father perfectly and he not only obeyed the father he loved the father perfectly from eternity past but the people whom God created and chose for himself rebelled against him brought shame and loss into his family into his kingdom and in Jesus the elder brother the firstborn instead of taking on the posture and attitude of the older son in this parable says I will be the true older brother I will go and seek and save my lost brother and he comes to earth he dies he pays the debt that we incurred to the loss of our heavenly father he pays that debt on the cross by dying for our sins and he is raised to new life so that when we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus it can be said of us that we who were dead is now alive again we who once were lost we who once were lost are now found again that's what Jesus has done he's the true older brother and because of what Jesus has done there is a celebration there's a note of celebration that runs through the entire chapter when the shepherd finds the lost sheep in verse six when the woman finds the lost coin in verse nine and here when the father recovers his lost son they throw a party I hope you see that that's God's heart for you if you're not a believer the moment you return to him come to follow him to believe in Jesus there's a party no expenses spared in heaven and with all the heavenly hosts for you that's what he did for each one of us when we came to know Christ he you you