

Luke 15:11 - 32 The Prodigal Son Pt. 2

11 And He said, "A certain man had two sons; 12 and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And 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 in need. 15 "And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 "And he was longing to fill 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 "And 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 be merry; 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 be merry. 25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 "And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things might be. 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 became angry, and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began entreating him. 29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my friends; 30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.' 31

“And he said to him, ‘My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 ‘But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’”

Last week we began this study, and we looked carefully at what transpired in the first part of the text. A son dis-honors his father by demanding wealth that really isn't his, grant deeds to 1/3 of the generations of his families combined work and wealth.

He then sells that wealth as futures. Whoever buys that must wait for his father to die in order to occupy the land. So it's a fire sale at best, he sells his family out, so to speak. He takes whatever cash he can get for those future values. Quite literally, the best word to describe what he did is divorce.

He has no love for family, no love for anyone but himself, and he wants a permanent separation. Divide the estate, give me whatever is mine. I'm leaving. I don't intend to ever return or see you again. See ya. I'm out of here.

He then squanders everything on loose living. Wasteful living. What I called "whoring". Wasting money on wanton pleasures with nothing of value that remains when the money is gone. Liquor. Drugs. Sex.

But then an unseen event comes. We called that providence. A severe famine comes to that land and people, including him, are literally starving to death. He gets a position feeding pigs, but the paychecks don't come and he's literally fighting with pigs to get some of the inedible carob pods they are eating.

A Jewish boy from a good family, in a gentile land and world, feeding swine, living like a pig, and dying of starvation. We talk about face down in the gutter waking up in your own vomit; this is it. Unimaginable to the hearers.

But in that situation, he comes to his senses and true repentance comes.

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."'

I'll go to my father. I'll confess the sin of my greed and loveless divorce. I'll accept that I can no longer be a son. But I'll get in line with the day workers and work for my father's generous wages. At least I won't die of starvation. It was a good plan.

Last week we spoke about human thriving. And we said that God's moral laws, the 10 commandments are a magnificent grace given to men, freely, because when men keep God's rules, thriving comes.

You don't have to know God at all. Just keep those rules and thriving and flourishing automatically comes. It's built into the cosmos like gravity. Moral law and natural laws are both designed by God and when we respect gravity, natural law, we thrive. Likewise when we respect God's designed moral laws we thrive.

I used the mormons as an example of that. They don't have a clue about God, but they keep God's moral laws, and guess what. You drive through Utah and there are silo's filled with enough spare food to keep that entire state alive for quite a while. Incredible thriving. A perfect example of what I'm talking about, and our entire nation is also an example to that same thing. Or should I say "was".

Thriving. We haven't seen Patrick or Chris for several months now. Chris told me not to expect to see them again. They feel I am using this pulpit for political purposes. A bully pulpit. I explained that I am in fact a bully. I'm a bully for this book.

Patrick and I want the same result. Flourishing. Human thriving. I do NOT question his honesty or his love for his fellow humans when he argues that he wants human thriving. And Patrick is passionate about a political avenue to

accomplish that purpose. I also want to be a responsible citizen in this republic, in choosing who can best help to bring human thriving.

I honestly love my fellow citizens just the same as Patrick does. We're both after the same result. Thriving. Human thriving. Flourishing

Our culture believes, and believes very passionately that the way to flourishing is absolute personal autonomy. Absolute Personal Autonomy. Absolute personal autonomy says there is no God except you. You are god and as such you and only you gets to decide everything that has an influence at all on you.

The only possible rule to throttle anything is your own well being. Your own thriving. And a second rule, you should not harm other absolute personal autonomists. Harm no one. Don't harm yourself. Other than that, the sky's the limit. Do whatever seems best. To you. No God, no moral laws, no 10 commandments.

One problem. One harm to get out of the way. There is this pesky old book that says "*There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof is destruction.*" Prov. 14:12

Now that's a nuisance. The very idea that man's thinking is broken, and even though he's god and should be able to choose what's best for him with no restraints at all, he might end up destroyed. Man's thinking is flawed. What seems so right . . . isn't? Something seems absolutely right but it can cause destruction?

God gave us the restraints necessary for thriving in the law of Moses. The 10 commandments. Do this and thrive. Ignore this and do what seems right to you, and destruction. Pretty simple stuff. It isn't rocket science.

But in our culture anyone who believes what this old book says is "on the wrong side of history." People who believe restraint actually brings the highest possible thriving in this fallen world are dinosaurs from another age

that need to be swept out of the way.

Progressivism believes no restraint at all to human autonomy is the highest possible thriving. I guess that makes those of us who believe in moral restraints graciously revealed to us by God himself, regressivists? On the wrong side of history pretty well describes the opposite of progressivist.

Folks, I beg for some sanity. I'm not being political. I'm teaching you what this book says! Personal autonomy with no restraint brings death. It isn't somehow loving to not tell people that. That IS the story of the prodigal son!

Let's think about this in relation to the story Jesus is telling about the wasteful son. The prodigal son. He secured his divorce successfully. His father allowed it to happen. That aligns perfectly with Romans chapter one.

24 Therefore God gave them over

26 For this reason God gave them

28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over

You can go read the details yourselves. I'm tired of being called a one issue preacher. In Jesus story, the father allows the son to experience absolute personal autonomy. And off he goes. Free at last, free at last.

Now in the story, when the son "comes to his senses" and defines the repentance that he will seek, he's actually sort of taking the mormon route. I want to be back under my father's general umbrella so I don't die of lack of food, but relationally, I can't expect to be a son. Still even as a hired man, there is general thriving. His father's hired men have more than enough!

That's a picture of thriving outside of a personal relationship with the father. His father's hired men, his day laborers are outside of a personal familial relationship but they are under the general umbrella of blessing that radiates out from this father's wealth. He feels that's the best he can hope for.

And the pharisee's who are listening would dis-agree. He shouldn't even get that much. These pharisee's, in a situation like Jesus describes, would have gone to this father and they would have held a full on funeral with mourning for this son. He is dead. Let's mourn and give him a virtual burial so that you can move on. Your son is dead. We'll see that later in the second son's reaction.

But this morning we are going to shift gears and look at the father's reaction to the son's repentance. It is shocking to these listeners. He has given absolute personal autonomy and in fact, just as this book says, it resulted in a shocking personal destruction.

We talk about free will in the Bible. This is free will. God gives us over to our free will to destroy ourselves. Divorce God. Live according to our own judgement. Destruction comes. This young man was blessed that he came to his senses . . . in time. Return to that umbrella of blessing that encompasses all the his father owns. What will the father do?

20 *“And he got up and came to his father.*

Repentance requires movement. Ultimately, the repentance that leads to life and thriving is a decision to leave the authority to reign of satan, free will and personal autonomy away from God, and to move physically away from that life to a new life under the authority to reign of God.

When Jesus comes on the scene preaching at the beginning, His message is simple. *Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* You're physically moving out of one kingdom, the kingdoms of this world, under the authority to reign of satan, into the kingdom of God. Satan used to be captor and king. Repentance is moving into God's realm so He is God and king.

There's no personal autonomy. That's a myth. You belong to someone. Sin captures you and makes you a citizen of Satan's cosmos, satan's world systems. Repentance is simply moving your citizenship to the authority to reign of God and coming into the benevolent realm and rule of His grace.

Eternal citizenship and grace.

But real repentance requires movement. 20 *“And he got up and came to his father.*

Again, the economy of words to describe eternal truths is only possible from the mind of God. In less than a dozen words, Jesus defines what real repentance looks like. Came to his senses. Acknowledged his sin. Realizes any situation connected with his father's house is infinitely better than the prison he has created in his experiment with complete personal autonomy, comes up with a plan of what he will say to hopefully ingratiate him at any level back under the canopy of thriving that is part of his father's world, and gets up and moves. Back to his fathers household.

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.

At this point in the story we shift gears. Now we're going to learn about the father. Guess what. Feelings were never mutual. He had no love for this father, but his father loved him deeply in spite of no reciprocity.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

There was no reciprocal love that caused God to love us and die for us. None. We were dead in sin. This picture is complete. A vile son who hates his father. A loving father who never stops loving even though no love is returned. This picture is so complete. This is from the mind of God. *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.*

This sentence would have angered those pharisees and scribes who were listening. NO! NO! You don't let this evil son back in. He can't come into this righteous father's presence. If anything, he can only be an indentured servant who is no more than a slave until all is paid back!

*But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and **ran***

Dignified jewish fathers did not run. It was a shame if someone even saw your feet. To gird up your loins and run to this wicked son is shameful behaviour. Undignified. In their version, it might take years before the father and the son ever even face each other in the same room.

No this wicked son, this evil wasteful son, the best he can hope for is some intermediary person who would set up the arrangement so the son could begin to work off his debt and never disgrace his father by being anywhere near him. This unclean trash.

To recognize him at a distance and feel sorry for him?? Unthinkable. To then run to meet him?? Disgraceful. Scandalous!

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.

This father would be surrounded at his compound by laborers, family, slaves, servants, a household who would be protective of his honor. His sons may not have loved him, but his servants and laborers would have benefited greatly by his generosity and kindness.

If the prodigal got to that line of defense those folks would have been like a protective watch dog. This son hurt his father. Anyone who loves him would be protective. Anyone in his umbrella of care would have not let this son get near his father. They would shower him with abuse and disgrace for how he treated his father.

That's why when the father sees the prodigal son afar off, he girds up his loins and breaks into a run like he's a 22 year old athlete. He wants to get to his son before the others of the household can. He wants to take the disgrace and scandal due that son, upon himself, and shield and protect the son from what

he is rightfully due.

It's the same idea as Joshua the high priest in Zechariah's prophecy ch. 3. The devil is right there to accuse Joshua. Joshua is standing there with his filthy garments. He has the same sin problems we all have. Filthy. But God intervenes and stands between Joshua and the devil. He says;

“The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?” The picture is the same as this father running ahead of all the others to this son in order to run interference between all in that household who would shower deserved abuse and disgrace on this formerly wicked son.

The father says, I'll take his disgrace upon myself. I'll get to him first. What a picture of how our God runs to our aid the moment we repent and turn around to come to Him. He runs ahead of all of our accusers and showers us with forgiveness.

This son returns in filthy rags. He's been wrestling the pigs to try to get a few of the pods. You know what he looks like and smells like? His father gets to him first and embraces him. And when it says he kissed him, the greek tense is that he kissed him repeatedly.

These pharisees are all about being ceremonially clean. Nothing would be more distasteful to them than being within a quarter mile radius anywhere near this kid who divorced judaism and became a gentile and lived with swine. Jesus couldn't have chosen a more revolting scenario. They couldn't get far enough away from someone like this. This father embraced him and kissed him repeatedly. Who does that?? God does.

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.’”

His repentance is true. He follows through. What did he forget though? In view of the loving reception, the son doesn't ask to be as a hired man. A

laborer with no connection beyond each days labors.

It's nice to be embraced. It's wonderful to be kissed repeatedly. Suddenly this son no longer wants the distance that day laborers understand. He longs to be part of his fathers household. So he leaves out the part about make me as one of your hired men.

Before this son went deeply into sin, the father had no value. His constant love and faithfulness to his sons was taken for granted. It held no value for the sons. The father's love is normative. The value is under-realized, taken for granted.

But after he divorces his father and finds himself in pig slop fighting pigs to get a morsel of their food, suddenly he understands the value of the love that father had, day in, day out, unchanging, immutable.

All of that value floods into him in this embrace. Embraces before the pig slop meant little. This embrace would be like a tidal wave. Listen to Jesus for a moment in Luke chapter 7

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. 40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

The enormity of the sin re-values the enormity of the love that is even bigger than the sin. Little debt, little love. Enormous debt, enormous love.

If the father ran and embraced the older son, the reaction might be, get off of me you old fool. What're you doing?? But when he runs and embraces and repeatedly kisses this son, the reaction is don't ever let go of me. That's what a proper realization of our condition, we're all in the pig slop whether we know it or not, but the ones who understand that are the ones who are saying, Don't ever let me go.

But it just gets better. As if that embrace and those kisses weren't enough for this kid covered in pig slop;

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 be merry;

There is much here that doesn't mean much in our culture. We take robes and sandals and rings to the thrift store because our houses are cluttered with the bulk of them. The freezer in the garage has most of a fattened calf waiting for the mood to strike. None of this impresses us much. But let's take another look.

First off is the word *slaves*. By this point, the slaves have caught up. The father takes off at a dead run and the slaves, the *doulos* run behind him to see what in the world is going on!

Perhaps we need to get out our scissors and simply cut this story out of our Bibles and throw it away. That's what our culture says we should do. In fact the fact that this man owned slaves makes him evil, and the entire Bible suspect. We should burn our Bibles because the hero in this story owns slaves. The whole book should go to the dump.

You'll recall that I told you last week that in this culture, these *doulos*, these slaves have a better gig than the day laborers, the hired men that the son wants

to be, just to get under this father's umbrella at any level.

The slaves have all of their needs cared for continually by this father. They have abundance in the care of this person. Even the hired men who can't count on continual employment like the slaves, even they have an abundance.

In Matthew 11:28 - 30, listen while I read an invitation from Jesus;
28 *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*
29 *“Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.* 30 *“For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”*

Folks, that's an invitation to be a slave. Those words are terms of slavery. Slavery isn't the issue. Who your master is . . . that's the issue. Are you in pig slop starving to death? That's a problem of poorly choosing your master.

Slavery is a perfect situation if you have the right master. That's what Jesus offers in Matthew 11. But in this story of the prodigal son, we learn that while slavery to the right master is desirable, this master doesn't stop at slavery, he showers this lost son with sonship.

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;*

In that culture at that time, in a wealthy household, there was a single robe that was the best robe. It was rarely worn. Think of a college graduation ceremony where all of the doctors stream out in those robes and hats. Every color and thing means something. Those robes are only brought out for the most special of occasions.

This is something like that. This is a wealthy household and that special "best" *proten* robe, the word means first, most important, highest in status. Guess what the next use of that robe was slated for. As far as anyone thought or expected, the next time that robe would come out would be at the older son's wedding.

It's cleaned, pressed, in the plastic protective cover from the cleaners waiting for the older son's wedding day. Nobody expected to see it until that day. That's the next scheduled purpose for the proven robe.

This father tells the slave tachy! Quickly! It's an "onomatopoeic" word. Tachy! We get our word tachometer from this greek root. Tachy! Run and get that robe! For the pig slop kid???? Really?? And the sandals!

In a wealthy house, only one person got to wear sandals. Most were barefoot. Sandals were special. This father was wealthy enough to have sandals. That was a big deal, just like the robe. Tachy. Get the special best robe and the sandals. Amazing, this father.

22 “. . . and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;

The ring is a signet. It makes a singular impression that is the family signature. This ring gives this son all of the powers that only the father had. This is like the family Visa card. On steroids. The scandal here is that this signet ring should go to the older brother. Shocking love. Scandalous love.

Bring everything I've got and give it to the pig slop kid. These pharisee's are squirming. This is scandalous! You give away the store to the pig slop kid that divorced you and left?? They're horrified. But there's still more;

23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry;

Again the words are telling. This is the grain fed calf. As opposed to all of the ordinary cattle that are just grazing. A wealthy family would choose a calf that was the best of the best and take it home and feed it the best grain on purpose. This one calf is waiting.

Like the robe, the rest of the family and the slaves and the whole village is looking at this calf and thinking, when that older son get's married, they're going to slaughter that calf and that's a party I'm not going to miss, because,

look at that thing. That's going to be delicious! Cows are delicious.

So let's add all of this up. The principal robe, the signet ring, the sandals for his feet, the fattened calf. Nobody expected to see any of this until the wedding feast for the first son. That's when all of these things should come out.

But this son who divorced his father and his family and went as deep into sin as he could figure out how to go, comes back home, covered in pig slime . . . this all comes out for him??? What in the world!!

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 be merry.

Heaven breaks out the celebration for the lost who get found, for the dead who are brought back to life, not for the ones who are righteous in their own eyes and don't know that they are dead and blind and naked.

Understanding of the depth of your sin brings about an understanding of the depth of God's love. Big sin, big love. Little sin, little love.

The elephant in the room is that all of us in Adam's race are the kid in the pig slop. This parable is a picture of man's deep fall into sin and the magnificent love of a Father who receives anyone who "comes to their senses" and returns to Him.

In our story this morning we've witnessed a man who went from pig slop, to royalty. From incredible poverty, next stop death, to incredible wealth. He owns all that the Father owns.

What was the turning point. How does this happen. The key words in the story are those words in vs. 17; but when he came to his senses;

He got to the end of himself. He's dangling near death. Absolute personal autonomy has resulted in a destroyed life, exactly as this book says. He gets to the end, almost dead, and he comes to his senses. That was the turning

point.

And when that happens he realizes, anyone in his father's world is better off, at any level than he is with his divorce and his autonomy.

I've often chuckled to myself that of all of Satan's methods since the church began, 2000 years ago, persecution, false doctrine, false religion, whatever else he's tried to deter people onto the wide road to hell, I think his single best idea is America. You keep people dangling but they never quite get to the place where they come to their senses.

I helped hand out food at the Baptist church on that government program for the poor. Everybody that showed up to get their bags of food had a better pickup truck than I do!

It's hard to convince people that they are in pig slop starving. Good one Satan. Everybody's playing a video game on the i-pad. Or looking at porn. We are dazed and confused in this land. A tidal wave looms off shore on it's way to landfall and we're pushing virtual buttons on a screen. The poorest of our poor are overweight.

Convincing people that absolute personal autonomy, a divorce from God and His laws brings destruction is difficult in this land. People just look at you and say; Huh? But in our story, providence brought a severe famine.

Absolute personal autonomy has brought spiritual bankruptcy in our land. Undeniably. But the severe famine hasn't come. At least not yet.

Next week we'll look at the older son's reaction to the father's love. This is if next week comes and God allows us to do that. Meanwhile, I beg you to re-assess your relationship to our Father. Are you in His kingdom. Have you left the kingdoms of this world and transferred ownership of you, to Him?

That's where the true wealth and royalty come from.

Psalms 23

*1 The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want.*

*2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.*

*3 He restoreth my soul;
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.*

*4 Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me;
Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.*

*5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
Thou anointest my head with oil;
My cup overfloweth.*

*6 Surely goodness and me will follow me all the days of my
life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*