

Luke 15:11 - 32 The Prodigal Son Pt. 3

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.’”

This is now our third and final look at the parable of the prodigal son. We've considered the prodigal himself which is the story of mankind, lost at the fall in Genesis 3. Divorced from God and living in a foreign land separated from his Father. Isaiah 59:1,2 says;

*1 Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short
That it cannot save;
Neither is His ear so dull
That it cannot hear.*

*2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,
And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not
hear.*

Those words are sadly true of every person born into Adam's race. We are born in sin, already removed. From Genesis 3 to the end of the book which is all of eternity future, the story of this book is redemption from that dreadful fall that we are born into in Adam's race. The prodigal son pictures fallen man.

Then last week we looked at the benevolent and loving Father who is full of tender mercies and forgiveness for this lost son now found, this dead son now alive again. The son gets up and moves toward the father, but the father rushes to meet the son and showers him with mercies and riches untold.

And finally, this morning if it please God we will look at the older brother, and spoiler alert, there is a surprise ending here that ancient middle eastern people would have understood that I have totally missed for 50 years, so I'm pretty excited about this morning.

For me at least, the puzzle pieces of this book have formed a beautiful scenic

complete picture for many years now. But there are many missing pieces, even though the scene is well formed, and I'm like the lady that found the coin when I get to fit one of the missing pieces into it's place. I want to share the found piece with my friends.

Of course, Jesus is teaching this parable in response to his adversarial detractors and enemies who continually intimate that this man is not the messiah, in spite of all of the miracles, never before seen, and never again after He is gone. He can't be Messiah, He doesn't play by our rules. No Messiah would eat and drink with the losers this man associates with.

1 Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. 2 And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Luke 15:1,2

That's the setting in which the story is told. So this parable like the lost sheep and lost coin is about those who are lost as opposed to those who suppose they are found. And it is about the joy in heaven whenever a lost person repents and returns to the safety of heaven, the reign and realm and rule of God.

And so we come to the final act in our 3 part drama. And again I continue to affirm, only the mind of God can put the entire drama of the fall, redemption, and the ultimate opposition of false religion against true religion into a 3 minute story. Every word seems packed with meaning.

Your mind cannot do this. Nor can mine. One of the proofs of the inspiration of scripture is this phenomenon captured in a simple story, 3 minutes long, that encapsulates the problem, the solution, and the resulting warfare. Vast centuries of truth focused into a story from the mind of God.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

How is it that the slaves and servants are aware of life events of the father and this son is removed? He was "in the field". He was taking care of the family

business. He was doing exactly what he was supposed to be doing. But the heart connection to the father is somehow dead.

The slaves who accompany the father are invested in the entirety of what has happened. The entire household is embroiled in what has happened. Killing the fatted calf. Running here and there at the father's command. We can only guess according to Jewish tradition and even according to the previous two parables that friends and neighbors have been made aware. Come to the party! The wayward son has returned!

But no one is sent to the other son. You can accuse me of reading way too much into this, but if the whole community is there celebrating, like in the lost sheep and the lost coin, how is this not communicated to the other son? It's almost as if both sons are away in a foreign land, even though this son is just a few fields away.

It's as if the revellers already know, the other son won't join this rejoicing of heaven. It's like the old analogy about let the sleeping dog lie. As soon as that dog wakes up there will be trouble. Again, I'm reading between the lines, but you have to ask; The whole community is at the party but the second son enters the scene while the celebration is well under way.

26 "And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things might be.

Early on, in part 1 a couple of weeks ago I told you there are 3 different words used in this story to define all of the associated workers and slaves.

In Vs. 17 the word is *misthos*. It means a day worker. A hireling who is paid the same day. These are below a slave. These are the guys at the donut shop waiting for some boss to come along and hold up 3 fingers and 3 of them will jump in the back of the pickup truck and get a days work. If they don't find work for the day, they don't eat that day.

Then in Vs. 22 we have the most common New Testament word for slave.

Doulous. It's the normal term for a person who is owned and answers to a master.

And finally, in Vs. 26 we have yet another term for a slave; *paidon*. And in this case, the slave or servant is a child. A small boy or girl, probably the offspring of parents who are slaves.

And so the older son calls one of the little ones to himself and says', What's going on? We can picture it perfectly.

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.'

That's all he needs to know. The level of celebrating; the fatted calf. Highest level possible. The whole community is there. It's the equivalent of a wedding feast. Big party.

The reason; Your brother came back safe and sound. Father killed the fatted calf, because . . . because he has received him. That word received is important. It defines very well that the father has gained, he has realized and accepted what was previously lost. Like the sheep and the coins, the thing received has brought joy and value to the one receiving.

Your father got your brother back! He's safe. Whole. Unharmd. And the result is what you see. Celebration. Big time. That smell is roasted cow! Yep, the grain fed special one.

28 "But he became angry, and was not willing to go in;

This reaction is decidedly different than the father's and the slaves and the friends. The father is ebullient. The joy is uncontainable. It has boiled over onto the entire community. Work has ceased. Celebration is ongoing. Everyone else is engaged fully and sharing the father's joy.

But this son shows up, and when he discovers the reason for the celebration,

he doesn't join. In fact just the opposite. He gets furious. *ōrgisthē* angry, enraged

The word is only used 3 times in the new testament. In Matthew 22 in the story of the wedding feast where the invited people ignore the kings invitation and even mistreat and kill the slaves sent to spread the invitation, it says when the king learned of it, he became *enraged* (same word) and he sent armies to destroy those people and burn up their village.

It's a potent word. The whole town is celebrating with the father but this other son is furious. Enraged. How can that be? Why?

Jealousy. Jealousy of his fathers attentions and angry about the reasons.

and his father came out and began entreating him. parekalei The father begged this son to come into the celebration.

So let's recap what we have here. Mankind lost. Mankind returns repentent. God recieves gladly. All heaven rejoices. The Father's friends and slaves rejoice! But others related to the Father not only do not rejoice, they are angry. The Father begs them to come into the celebration.

Jesus doesn't leave the situation there though. He's going to drill down into the anger of the scribes and pharisee's. Oh yes, this second son is them, and they aren't dumb. They know exactly who represents what in this story. The scribes and pharisees are boiling over with hatred and jealousy.

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;

Perhaps the most telling word in that sentence is 'my' friends. Apparently the father and those in the house celebrating are not included in who this son would call his friends. He has no heart for this father. He has no heart for his brother. And apparently those inside celebrating would not be at his party.

These scribes and pharisee's were an exclusive club. They were segregated from the common people. They considered everyone else as below them and of no value to either God or man.

This is part one of a dual part argument. We'll summarize. *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;* Work good, pay bad.

30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.' Work bad, pay good.

This is a complaint. I worked hard and got less than I deserved. He devoured your wealth with harlots and got more than he deserved. God, the disposition of your wealth is out of whack. You give away the store to sinners. You withhold from those who are working hard to be righteous.

The argument is with God. Who wins, who loses. Who gets accepted, who gets rejected. If we're honest, we can't help agreeing a bit with the older brother. We have to think about it a bit.

Notice that he won't own his brother. *when this son of yours.* He's not my brother. He's this son of yours. He did in fact devour his father's wealth with harlots. No argument But that's not what the celebration is about.

He repented. He returned in sorrow, repenting and asking to somehow be forgiven. Just enough to come under the father's canopy of blessing, at any level. That act caused the father to not only forgive, but to shower him with wealth. The father responds to repentance, not self righteous works.

Hosea 6 and Micah 6 both tell Israel; *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* God wants your heart, not your self righteous works.

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.’”*

Now then, I told you this has a surprise ending that I had never seen before, and indeed, without the help of men a lot smarter than I am, would never have seen at all. The surprise is that the ending is missing. The story is purposely left unfinished.

I'm drawing heavily from a man named Kenneth Bailey who spent 40 years living and teaching the Bible in Jerusalem, Lebanon, Egypt and Cyprus. He was fluent in the middle eastern languages and the different structures of their prose.

It turns out that Jesus here was using a style of prose called a chiasm. It breaks the story up into stanza's, not unlike Isaiah would have done, and very common to the original hearers.

So this parable was constructed of 2 parts each with eight stanza's. And the way this particular style works is the stanza's go like A,B,C,D-D,C,B,A So the second A speaks the result back to the first A, the second B speaks the result back to the first B, and so on. A-B-C-D_D-C-B-A. It winds up the spiral with the problem which is death, and it winds back down with the solution, which is life, resurrection from the dead.

Bear with me now because this is important to understand the depth of what Jesus is teaching these folks. Part one is the Sons Death and the Father's restoration to life.

A. Death 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.*

B. ALL IS LOST 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.

C. REJECTION 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.

D. THE PROBLEM 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!

D. THE SOLUTION 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.

C. ACCEPTANCE 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.

B. ALL IS RESTORED 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;

A. RESURRECTION 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.

-----Part 1 is a completed
chiasm-----

Part 2 Chiasm

A. HE STANDS ALOOF 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.*

B. PEACE CAUSES ANGER 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;*

C. COSTLY LOVE *and his father came out and began entreating him.*

D. MY ACTIONS MY PAY 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;*

D. HIS ACTIONS HIS PAY 30 *but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.’*

C. COSTLY LOVE 31 *“And he said to him, ‘My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.*

B. YOUR BROTHER SAFE, JOY 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.’”*

A. MISSING ENDING (ALOOF STILL?)

How does the story end? What does the brother do?

We actually do have a parallel story in the Bible that has a complete ending for us. This gets fascinating, and I pray that I'm a good enough teacher to pull this off.

Isn't it funny how often we end up in the book of Genesis. The book of beginnings explains so much of the how and why of things even now. This is vital and foundational knowledge. Turn with me to Genesis 3

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

Sin enters the world and we try to make it right with God by covering it up. The nakedness and the fig leaves is a parallel picture of sin and how we try to hide it from God, we make a fig leaf cover for our sin.

8 And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

We hide our nakedness, our spiritual bankruptcy from God. We're off in a foreign land doing bad stuff and we don't want God to know about it.

*9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"
10 And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."*

The fig leaves don't undo the sin. They're a poor covering for sin. So we get as far away from God as we can.

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12 And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

The blame game. She made me do it. Well the serpent made me do it. None of that undoes the sin. Bankruptcy doesn't go away blaming someone else.

But what God says to the serpent is foundational to our story this morning.

*14 And the LORD God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly shall you go,
And dust shall you eat
All the days of your life;*

*15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

Vs. 15 is the first prophecy in all of the Bible. The woman's seed. Someone known only as He at this point. This person is at war with the serpent.

Enmity is the word for the hatred of enemies. From this moment on, there will be a continual war, continual strife between whoever the He is and all those who belong to Him, and the Serpent and all of those who belong to him.

Two families from that moment in the garden forward. Those who are purchased and belong to God will be at war with this world and all those in this world who are under the rule and reign of the serpent.

Adam and Eve are cast out of the garden, out of God's presence. I'll lose you if I try to read the entire story. But listen to vs. 20 *Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. 21 And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.*

The covering for sin required blood sacrifices. Animals had to be slaughtered in order to make those garments of skins. Man's effort, the fig leaves sewn, did not cover, so God showed them how to slaughter animals to make the

covering for sin.

Even here in Genesis, the blood let in order to cover the nakedness is our first picture of the Lamb of God who would be slaughtered to cover all of our sins.

That sets the stage. Enmity between those who will belong to God, those who He receives and those who He does not receive. Genesis chapter 4: Two brothers. Just like our story this morning. The parallels are pretty obvious.

1 Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD." 2 And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

Cain's a farmer. Abel's a rancher. Nothing wrong with either occupation. But remember, blood must be let to cover sin. The fig leaves didn't cut it.

3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

The parallels are shouting out to us. One father, two brothers. God receives one sacrifice and rejects the other. Why? Why is God partial? The reason is in God's plan for the remission of sin. Blood is required. That never ending image of blood to cover sin. Cain had a better idea. No blood required. Self effort in a self styled religion. I'll work hard to grow God the best veggies I can do with my own effort. He'll accept that. This bloody sacrificial idea is inconvenient.

In Jesus day, at the celebration of the passover in the temple, a literal river of blood flowed out of the temple during that time period of non stop slaughter of lambs for each family's covering for sin.

Cain is the progenitor of false religion. Ignore God's revealed requirement.

Do it ourselves, our own way. Cain grew awesome fruits. We'll give some of that to God and it should be just as good as Abel's flesh and fat from animal slaughter.

The father in our story this morning receives the prodigal son back because why? He repented. He admitted his sin. He begged for not only his father's forgiveness but also a return to the umbrella of blessing inside his father's rule and reign. He is Abel.

5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

The older brother is angry because he's been beating his brains out working for his father's acceptance on his terms but he's aloof. There is no love, no relationship. He's doing it his way. Working his way to acceptance . . . on his terms.

In the parable Jesus tells, when the father receives the first brother, the second brother is wroth. His anger is a rage. It's the same anger that burnt down a city in the Matthew story. This is the picture of the rage of false religion with true religion.

This is a perfect illustration of the enmity that God put, in the garden, between the serpent and his progeny, and the ones who are received by God and who become His progeny, His sons.

That hatred of those rejected by God, those who don't belong to God for those who do belong to God goes all the way back to the garden of Eden and the curse pronounced on the serpent, and the prophecy of him being crushed by the Messiah, the Christ.

So then, how does our story of the prodigal son end. The last stanza is

missing. Jesus just turned and walked away. He left it unfinished. How does it end. The followers of Jesus are the first brother. The scribes and pharisees, the false religion of Israel are the second brother. God receives the poor sinners. He rejects the false religion of Israel. How does the story end?

8b And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Cain slew Abel. False religion murdered true religion. Those under the rule and reign of Satan rose up and slew those who belong to and who are received by God.

It will only be weeks until those who listened to Jesus incomplete story will provide the ending that He left off. The final stanza was up to them to complete.

What do we take away. The blood of Jesus that was let by the scribes and the pharisees and the rulers of Israel in conjunction with Rome was the final sacrifice for sin. The picture was completed when His blood flowed on that cross for our sins.

But the enmity is not completed. The war between Satan and his, against God and those who belong to Him continues to rage this morning. Satan hates and continues to try to murder all who are owned by God, and that war will continue until Messiah comes a second time and crushes Satan's head, just as Genesis 3:15 prophesied 6000 years ago. That war is still raging. The jealous older son is still raging with hatred.

Look around you. Why do you think churches are closed. It isn't because of the flu. There is a war raging behind the scene this morning between good and evil, between God and His children, and Satan and his children. We should not be surprised.

Jesus, in a 3 minute long story has encapsulated the fall of men, the redemption possible in repentance, the Father's joy and sonship provided for

those who will return to Him, and the world's rage against all who are restored. Only the mind of God could do that.