

Remnant Life Church
October 9, 2016
The Parables of Jesus:
The Prodigal Son's Brother
Luke 15:11-32

- You don't always get what you expect in life, things will not always go the way you want them to, but you still have to deal with it in the proper way.
- This statement applies to our focus this morning
- Much has been said about the prodigal son and his father – the very picture and image of our Heavenly Father as He welcomes each of us with forgiveness and love
 - Much less has been said, however, about the long-suffering brother who witnessed his little brother's foolishness
 - How much are we like that brother when life is not “fair” or does not go the way we think it should?
 - This story is ultimately about restoration and forgiveness but it is also a warning against allowing the desires of the flesh (world) to dictate our lives and actions
- **READ** – [Luke 15:11-32](#)
- The depth of the son's disrespect must first be realized to fully appreciate what the father did so willingly
 - In the culture of that day the father controlled all of the family's wealth until his death
 - By demanding his inheritance, the son is basically saying “I wish you were dead”
 - The insult and hurt would have been to the very heart of the father
 - Land would have been a significant part of what he received and to leave to go to another land with his wealth meant he would have sold off his portion
 - He then further isolated his father by moving away from him to distance himself from his authority
 - So this was not just the youthful and immature impatience of a son but actions born out of deep rebellion
 - In every way possible the son embarrassed, demeaned, and shamed his father
 - What father could forgive that?!?
- There are 2 levels of meaning in what Jesus is talking about in this parable – the first is broad in scope aimed primarily at the Pharisees and the second more personal for those “sinners” listening ([15:1-2](#))
 - First Level –
 - The prodigal son is Israel
 - Enjoyed the favor and protection of God as long as they followed His Word and worshipped only Him
 - They wanted the promised blessing ([Deut 28:1-14](#)) but refuse to stay faithful

- Immediately upon Joshua's death they began to worship other gods (Judges 2:8-10)
- As a result they became a divided nation after Solomon died and were captured and dispersed by the Babylonians
- The father is a representation of God
 - The father was overjoyed at his son's return while the brother could only hold him to his past
 - When the son repented his father fully forgave him just as God wanted to do for Israel
- The older brother are the Pharisees
 - They, like the brother, had no concept of grace
 - Resentment is at the core of their heart – (Luke 15:2 - *But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*)
 - In the culture of Jesus' day, the oldest son would act as the arbitrator in resolving disputes as preparation for the day he would lead the family
 - He should have been the one to bring his father and brother back together but instead allowed the coldness of his heart to remove him from his rightful place of honor
 - The Pharisees, through their lack of grace and love for the people of God, lost their place of honor as well
 - The spiritual leaders of Israel from the time of Aaron were honored for the role God called them to fulfill
 - Note at the end of the parable we do not hear the brother's final response
 - Jesus did this to give the Pharisees the opportunity to repent and see the error of their hearts

On the second level there is a lesson that was intended for the people who were listening

- The two sons represent how we can be lost no matter where we spend our time
 - One was lost away from home the other sinned at home
 - One was lost and separated by miles the other by coldness and hardness of heart
 - One sinned against the flesh the other against the spirit
 - Both sinned – the difference was one recognized his need and repented while the other did not
- It is easy for us to see ourselves in the young son
 - He made a selfish, bad decision
 - He became completely self-centered and lost everything as a result
 - The consequences of sin are always horrific
 - Sin costs you more than you wanted to pay; takes you places you did not want to go; and keeps you longer than you wanted to stay
 - He realizes his errors; knows what he has to do - even as difficult as it would be - and as a result is welcomed and restored to his former status

- Everyone can at some level identify with his story and find hope in how the story ends
- It is a little more difficult, however, to identify with and see ourselves in the older brother
 - He has fought the good fight and been the good and faithful son
 - He has probably sacrificed parts of his life to walk in his rightful place as first born
 - First born was a position of honor and responsibility
 - When the father died the first born son would assume the mantle of family leadership
 - The family wealth and estate would pass on to the son to be distributed or maintained at his discretion
 - His attitude is one of hurt and betrayal and, to our thinking, rightly so
 - That is exactly what Jesus wanted those listening to do – identify with the injustice of the events according to the OT law
 - In order for there to be a clear distinction between the heart of man and the heart of God
 - Our “get even” attitude compared to God’s grace and mercy
 - God is gracious even to those who are undeserving – just like every one of us!
- But there are aspects of the older brother that are actually very easy to identify within our own lives today
 - He was born into privilege and fellowship but lived like more like a servant than a son
 - How many times do we - as Christians - forgiven, joint heirs with Jesus, a royal priesthood, insist on living like servants to the world’s ungodly definition of what is right and wrong, what is fair, and who I am?
 - We must guard against a resentful attitude in our own relationship with God and others.
 - Grace must make us gracious.
 - The younger brother revealed his rebelliousness through wild living.
 - The older brother acted out his rebellious nature quietly, through pride and unforgiveness.
 - Our culture would call the younger one wild and rebellious in his actions
 - It would call the older one responsible and respectable.
 - These are external qualities only
 - But to God they were both sinners and lost.
 - The younger brother was found but the account does not tell us what happened to the older one.
- The story of the Prodigal Son is a beautiful reminder of God’s love and mercy to us, the sons and daughters, who turn our backs on Him
- It is also a warning of what unforgiveness and jealousy can do to our hearts

- Jesus was telling the Pharisees, like the oldest brother, it does not matter what position you occupy if your heart is cold toward others
- It all starts with LOVE
- **Matt 22:36-40** - *“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*