

The Prodigal Who Never Left

Luke 15: 25-32

We have read a portion of a very familiar chapter in the Bible. This 15th chapter of Luke deals with lost things - a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. We all know the story of the Prodigal son very well. Most often this is the focus of the message in this passage. This morning I want to focus on the elder brother who stayed at home. Through his life Jesus illustrates a great truth that He wants to convey to the Pharisees. Their attitude toward the lost was the purpose for Jesus giving these parables, [vv.1-2](#).

I will warn you from the start that this will be a difficult passage to deal with. The life of this young man resembles the lives of many. It is likely that each of us has lived as the prodigal's brother at some point in our lives. You may be in that situation today. You maybe have never trusted Christ as your Savior and haven't found the compassion that you need for others. You may be saved, but have trouble accepting your brother or sister in Christ as you should. I pray that you will open your heart to the [details](#) our Lord reveals as we consider: [The Prodigal Who Never Left](#).

I. The Reflection of the Son – I want to begin by looking at the position of the son and the appearance that he portrayed. By all outward appearances, his life was lived as it should have been. Notice:

A. His Lineage (25) – *Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.* We find that he was the elder son of the two brothers. This gave him certain rights that the younger brother could not claim. He was to receive the greater portion of the father's inheritance. He was to become the head of the family upon the death of his father. The younger son had already received his portion and had gone into a far country to live a life of excess. This young man stood in a position to inherit all that remained of the father's possessions.

B. His Labor (25) – We also find that this man was in the field working for his father. The younger son had demanded his inheritance and went out to waste his substance with riotous living. He had grown tired of the father's demands and the restrictions of living in the father's home, but the elder son had remained faithful to do as his father commanded. He was busy doing the work of the father.

C. His Loyalty (29a) – *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment:* The elder son was submissive to the father's will. He had

been faithful all those years to serve him. Never once had he refused to fulfill the work he was asked to do. He never lived in such a way that brought shame or reproach unto the family. Never had he abandoned the family to seek out his own fleshly desires. He was just quietly working and serving his father. It seems that all was well with the elder son, as far as outward appearances and circumstances are concerned. Who wouldn't want a child who was faithful and diligent in the work he was called to do?

- So you might ask, how does all of this relate to me? We can be seen in the elder son. You may be from a long line of Christians. You may be from a home where God was served faithfully. You may stand in line to inherit a great spiritual legacy. You may be one who is working at something for the Lord. You may be teaching a Sunday school class or serving on a committee. You may be here every time the doors are open and faithfully perform the work you've been assigned.
- But these alone do not ensure a right relationship with the Lord. Just because we stand to inherit a spiritual legacy or simply because we are busy in church activities and faithful to attend the services is no guarantee that we are where God would have us be. There is more to serving the Lord than what is shown and revealed on the surface. Busyness doesn't always result in blessing. Faithfulness to duties apart from the Lord is a work of vanity. Religion doesn't provide redemption. Jesus alone can do that! All appeared well for the elder son, but it was just a facade, a vain show.

I. The Reflection of the Son

II. The Resentment of the Son – We stepped into the middle of the story. The prodigal has returned from the far country to a celebration of joy. It is at this time that the true character of the elder son is revealed. What can we learn about the attitude and actions of this man? We find that:

A. He was Suspicious (25b-26) – and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. [26] And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. Upon returning from the field that day, he heard music and saw people dancing. He grew suspicious of what the celebration was about. He immediately began to enquire as to what was going on. There was a party happening that he had no prior knowledge of. He had been the one in the field doing the work and he had not been consulted about the party. How could they start a celebration without getting my input? He was the type who always looked over his shoulder, trying to make sure that everyone was in their place and that all things were done according to his approval.

- Many Christian get so wrapped up in keeping up with the work and lives of others that they cannot enjoy their service, much less be effective. They have to be on top of every situation and feel

as if things must be carried out according to their desires. If they don't see a need for it, then the church doesn't need it!

B. He was Jealous (28) – *And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.* There was no rejoicing because his brother had returned from a life of sin. He was angry that his father had granted a celebration for the wayward son. He had been the one working faithfully, but had never had the opportunity to throw a party for his friends. The elder brother was consumed with anger and jealousy. If it wasn't a party to honor his hard work, then he wanted no part of it. After all, he was the heir to the inheritance. He was to be the man in charge.

- Jealousy is one of the greatest hindrances in the church. Many cannot rejoice if God is using someone else because they feel threatened by them. They may do a better job than I did and get more recognition.
- These may claim to want the church to grow, but not if it involves someone else doing the work. God will never bless a proud and jealous heart. He wants us to serve in humility and submission.

C. He was Rebellious (28b) – As the son came in from the field, he refused to go into the house and join the celebration. He was willing to be in the field of service, but not in the house of submission. He had decided to just stay away from the celebration if it wasn't centered on him.

- There are many today who refuse to go into the house. You may be willing to attend the services, but you are not willing to come in and take an active part. There may be those here that you just can't embrace and you had rather stand on the outside looking in than to come in and be a part of anything they are involved with.
- The elder son was the one who was missing out. The others were enjoying the celebration. You will be the one to suffer from an attitude of rebellion. You may decide to give up your service for the Lord because things haven't gone your way. You may refuse to be a part of the activities around here because someone may be here that you don't like, but you will be the one to miss the blessing. The prodigal had come in repentance. The elder brother stood outside with a heart of bitterness. Who do you think the Lord was pleased with? Who do you think He blessed?

D. He was Contentious (29-30) – *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: [30] But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.* Can you sense the arrogance and the animosity that he had. Father this is not right. I have been here all this time. I have served you faithfully. I wasn't the

one who went and wasted my inheritance among harlots and wicked people. You never gave me a fattened calf or the opportunity to have a party with my friends. But as soon as this disgrace to the family shows back up you throw a grand party for him!

- The elder son brought as much shame and hurt to the father by publicly arguing with him as the prodigal did. He wanted the father to know that he wanted no part of the celebration, even if it was the will of the father. He declared that he wanted no part of what the father desired.
- Have you been guilty of the same? Has God spoken to you about a need in your life? Have you refused to take part in the work of the church because it didn't please you? Have you told God that you will have no part of it? If so, you have essentially told God that you are willfully going to disobey His will for your life. You have in essence told God that you don't care what His wishes are; you are determined to have it your way!

I. The Reflection of the Son

II. The Resentment of the Son

III. The Response of the Father – This has been a difficult lesson to deal with, but it doesn't end without hope. Let's consider the father's response.

A. It was a Compassionate Response (28c) – *And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.* I can imagine one of the servants coming into the celebration with the news that the elder son is outside in anger. "Sir, he has refused to come in and join the festivities." With that the father went out and intreated the son. This shows the compassion of the father for both his sons. It means that the father went and "*came alongside the son to offer consolation, to comfort and encourage him, even begging that he would come in the house.*" He didn't go out with demands or harsh words, but with a heart of compassion.

- That is the way that our heavenly Father responds to those who are apart from Him. He speaks to the heart, coming alongside the hurting, offering comfort and encouragement, pleading to the wayward soul to come in unto Him. I believe that the Lord is offering words of compassion to hearts here today. How will you respond to His call?

B. It was a Confident Response (31) – *And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.* The father reminds the son that he is still mindful of him. He hasn't forgotten his faithfulness and reassures him that all that he has belongs to him. There was no need to be so

upset over the celebration. His love for him was not changed or affected by the return of the prodigal.

- The Lord wants some of you to realize that He is still mindful of you. He is aware of where you are and the hurt you feel. He wants you to realize that He has much more to offer than the meager supply that you are currently trying to make it on. Just because there are others in the family doesn't mean that He has forsaken you. Just because He has chosen to use others in His work doesn't mean that He no longer needs you to fill your place. The Lord wants all to have that intimate fellowship with Him, but the decision is ours!

C. It was a Compelling Response (32) –*It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.* The father tells the son that it was meet, *or necessary* to make merry for the son who was dead, but alive again, for the one who was lost, but now found. The father had cause for celebration and he was only doing what was necessary.

- You may not understand all that God is doing around here, but it is necessary for His glory. Everything may not be as you desired, but it remains the work of God. His work must continue. Everything that we do is for His glory. It isn't about who is doing what, or who is getting the most recognition; it is about serving the Lord and accomplishing His will for the church.
- I believe the father was telling the son that the celebration was the right thing to do and he had a choice to make. He could come in and be a part of the celebration or remain outside and pout over his pride. The Lord is calling upon you to decide today. The work of God will go on. It has to! The question is whether you will choose to be a part of that work or not. If you have never been saved the Lord wants you to understand that salvation is necessary to be accepted of Him. There is no other way; there is no other choice!

It's interesting that this parable closes without an ending. We have no way of knowing what the elder son decided. The choice was clear and it was his decision to make. It was his life to live.

So it is with each of us. Your life is an open book with a new page being written each day. What will be written on today's page? What will you decide? Will you come in unto the Lord or remain outside? You alone can make that choice!