

# **The Two Lost Sons and the Good Father**

Part 2: The Older Son

{11} And He said, "A man had two sons. {12} "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So 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 impoverished.

{15} "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. {16} "And he would have gladly filled 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} "So 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 celebrate; {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 celebrate. {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 could 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] pleading with 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 young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; {30} but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

{31} "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. {32} 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and [has begun] to live, and [was] lost and has been found.'" [Luke 15:11-32 NASB]

# Who was Jesus Speaking To?

- Younger brothers - tax collectors, prostitutes, sinners
- Elder brothers - scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees
  - Story of the Two Sons is the third of three rebukes given to the “elder brothers”
    - i. The Lost Sheep (Jesus the Good Shepherd)
    - ii. The Lost Coin (Holy Spirit the Light/Lamp)
    - iii. The Lost Sons (God the Father)



# The Lost Younger Son

- “Give me the share of the estate that falls to me”
  - This would have been a shocking statement and a sign of deep disrespect.
  - He was essentially wishing his father were dead.
  - He wants his father’s things, but not his father.
  - He is weary of the relationship with his father and wants out...NOW.

# The Lost Older Son

- It's now the older son's turn to disgrace the father.
- He refuses to go into, perhaps, the biggest public event his father has ever hosted.
  - Remaining outside the celebration publicly casts a vote of “no-confidence” in his father.
  - This forces the father to come out and talk with him - a demeaning thing for the lord of a great manor and host of a spectacular feast.

# Why is the Older Son So Mad?

- He's very upset about the cost of the celebration.
  - .."you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; {30} but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him." (v.29-30)
  - By bringing the younger son back in to the family fold, he has made him an heir again, with claim to one-third (of their now very diminished) wealth.

# Where is the Justice?

- The older brother is thinking, “I’ve worked for what I have and earned what I’ve got, but my brother has done nothing to earn anything.”
- “I have never disobeyed you. So I have rights! Father, you have no right to make these decisions unilaterally. I deserve to be consulted.”
- The older brother’s fury leads him to disgrace his father even further.

# Further Disgrace from the Older Brother

- He refuses to address his father in the elaborately respectful manner that inferiors address superiors in public.
- He does not say, “Esteemed, father,” but instead, “Look!”
  - A modern-day equivalent might be a son writing a humiliated tell-all memoir that destroys his dad’s career and reputation.
- The Father could have disowned him on the spot but instead shows mercy as well to his oldest son.

# Redefining Sin

- The two lost sons reveal to us the main two ways people try to find happiness and fulfillment:
  - Self-discovery
  - Moral conformity
- Each is way of finding personal significance and worth, addressing the ills of the world, and of determining right from wrong.

# Redefining Sin

- Both self-discovery enthusiasts and moral conformists are self-righteous - they are depending on their “rightness” or how “right” they are.
- There are moral conformists who slip into self-discovery as a “release valve” and there are those in self-discovery who regard religious conservatives with all the self-righteous, condescension of the worst Pharisee.

# Redefining Sin

- The elder brother is not losing the father's love in spite of his goodness, but because of it.
- It is not his sins that creates the barrier between him and his father, it's the pride he has in his moral record.
- Both brothers only valued their father for his wealth and not his love.
- The older brother's obedience was his way of leveraging control with God - to put God in a position where He "owes them".



Both sons resented their father's authority and sought ways to get out from under it. They each wanted to get into a position where they could tell the father what to do. Each one, in other words, rebelled - but one did so by being very bad and the other by being extremely good.

# Jesus' Radical Redefinition of Sin

- Generally, people define sin as breaking a list of rules or one of the rules.
- Jesus redefines sin as this:
  - Sin is not just breaking the rules, it is putting yourself in place of God as Savior, Lord and Judge just as each son sought to displace the authority of the father in their own life.

# How is the Gospel of Jesus Christ Unique?

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is not about religion or irreligion, morality or immorality, moralism or relativism, conservatism or liberalism.
- In Jesus Christ's gospel, everyone is wrong, everyone is loved and everyone is invited to recognize this and change.
  - Older brothers divide the world into two: the moral and immoral.
  - Younger brothers do the same thing: the open-minded/tolerant VS the bigoted/narrow-minded

# How is the Gospel of Jesus Christ Unique?

- Jesus also divides people into two groups:
  - {14}...for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." [Luke 18:14 NKJV]
  - {6} Though the LORD is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud. [Psalm 138:6 NLT]
  - {6} But He gives a greater grace. Therefore [it] says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." [James 4:6 NASB]