

Luke 15:11-32

Introduction: This is the third part of the trilogy of parables about rejoicing when finding what has been lost (15:7, 11). Both sons want what the father possesses. Both need to repent. The father loves them both, but only the younger one demonstrates genuine repentance. This is often referred to as the parable of the prodigal son (since the late 300's). I think this misses the point of the parable in so many ways.

- 1) We should rejoice when self-destructive sinners repent—15:11-24
 - a) He is demonstrating a self-absorbed mindset—15:11-12 ¹¹ *Then 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 will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them.*
 - i) Some claim that the younger got half of what the older son would receive (i.e. about 1/3 of the total) based on a misinterpretation (I think) of Deuteronomy 21:17.
 - ii) The older unrepentant son gets his share at this time and chooses to stay.
 - b) He gets destroyed—15:13-16 ¹³ *And not many days later, (cf. Proverbs 13:15)*
 - i) His fault—*the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country (anxious to demonstrate his independence), and there he squandered/scattered his estate with reckless living (a wild lifestyle). ¹⁴ Now when he had spent everything,*
 - ii) Not his fault—*a severe famine took place in that country, and he began to be in need.*
 - iii) His choice—¹⁵ *So having went, he joined himself to (got a job with) one of the citizens of that country, and he (the citizen) sent him into his fields to feed pigs (unclean animals; Leviticus 11:7).*
 - iv) Consequences—¹⁶ *And he was longing to fill his stomach with the carob pods that the pigs (and destitute people) were eating, and no one was giving him anything.*
 - v) Sin never delivers what it promises.
 - c) He reflects accurately and humbly on his condition—15:17-19 ¹⁷ *But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have excess bread, but I am destroying myself with famine! ¹⁸ After I get up, I will go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven (i.e. God) and in your presence, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me (cf. “give me” in 15:12) as one of your hired (day-to-day) workers.”*
 - d) He receives abundant, gracious forgiveness from those he sinned against—15:20-24
 - i) Compassionately embraced despite his uncleanness—15:20 ²⁰ *And after getting up, he came to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and having rushed forward he embraced him and kissed him.*

- (1) The father knew the public humiliation his son would face.
- ii) Genuine repentance—15:21 ²¹ *And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your presence, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’*
- (1) God is always the ultimate offended party (cf. Genesis 39:9; 2nd Samuel 12:13)
- (2) He violated the 5th commandment re: honoring your parents (Exodus 20:12)
- iii) Lavish celebration of his full restoration—15:22-24 ²² *But the father said to his bondslaves, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and sandals on his feet; ²³ and having led out the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let us celebrate with a feast; ²⁴ because this son of mine was dead, and is alive again; he was destroyed (in a state of destruction) and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.*
- (1) The son is treated as the guest of honor. The father rejoices to have the repentant son at the table.
- 2) It is morally necessary for us to rejoice when self-destructive sinners repent—15:25-32
- a) Demonstrating a self-absorbed mindset—15:25-28 ²⁵ *Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard (instrumental) music [συμφωνία] and dancing [χορός]. ²⁶ And having summoned one of the servants, he was inquiring why these things were happening. ²⁷ And he (the servant) said to him, ‘Your brother has arrived, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf, because he has welcomed him back healthy.’ ²⁸ But he (the older son) was enraged and was not willing (he refused) to enter. Therefore, his father came out and urged him.*
- i) Ironically the attitude of the older son has left him outside the banquet and without joy. (NET)
- ii) The apparent insider is now an outsider. (Bock)
- b) Reflecting inaccurately on his true condition—15:29-30 ²⁹ *But having responded, he said to his father,*
- i) Wrong attitude toward his father’s dealing with himself—‘*Look, ...*
- (1) An inaccurate view of what working for his father has been like—*for so many years I have slaved away [δουλεύω] for you;*
- (2) In inaccurate view of his obedience—*I have never [οὐδέποτε] ignored a command of yours, and yet you never gave me (emphatic) a young goat so that I could celebrated with my friends.*
- (3) In other words:
- (a) This isn’t fair!
- (b) I deserve **more** than I have received. Father, you have given me too little!
- ii) Wrong attitude toward his father’s dealing with his brother—15:30 ³⁰ *But ...*

- (1) An inaccurate view of his broken relationship with his brother—*as soon as this **son of yours** (emphatic) (not “my brother”) arrived,*
 - (a) Grace was extended too soon
 - (2) An inaccurate view of his brother’s behavior—*who devoured your assets with prostitutes,*
 - (a) Grace was extended to the wrong person. He wrongly assumes prostitution on the part of his brother.
 - (3) An inaccurate view of his father’s behavior—*you slaughtered the fattened calf for him!*
 - (a) Grace was extended in the wrong way. It was too lavish!
 - (4) In other words:
 - (a) This isn’t fair! Father, you are rewarding sinful behavior.
 - (b) He deserves **less** than he has received. You have given him too much!
- c) Not recognizing the need to extend gracious forgiveness to self-destructive sinners—15:31-32 ³¹ *And he said to him,*
- i) The older brother’s position—15:31 *‘Child, **you** (emphatic) are always with me, and everything that belongs to me is yours^{pl} (the estate belongs to both of you).*
 - ii) The younger brother’s position—15:32 ³² *But it was necessary for us (the servants and I, perhaps the whole village?) to celebrate and rejoice, because this **brother of yours** (emphatic; he is still part of the family)*
 - (1) *was dead and is alive again;*
 - (2) *he was destroyed and has been found.”*
 - iii) Jesus does not tell us how the older brother responded to the father’s attempted corrections.
- 3) The point is this:
- a) That which has been destroyed (and assumed lost) can be restored.
 - i) Cf. Luke 15:1
 - b) That which has been found should be embraced and rejoiced over (just like the sheep, the coin, and the younger son).
 - i) Cf. Luke 15:2
 - c) No history of sin is too great to be forgiven, whether you identify with the younger or older sinner. We need to remind ourselves that even though I am the prodigal son, there is a gracious father ready and willing to forgive me.

Take-home truth: how do I respond when self-destructive sinners repent and turn to Christ?

Last song: TMH # 35 *Come Lonely Heart*