

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-32 “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to hear [Jesus]. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." 3 So He spoke this parable to them, saying: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' 10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."' ' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, '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 fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; 24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

25 Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' 28 But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. 32 It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'""

"God's Prodigal People"

Chapters 15 & 16 of the Gospel of Luke brings us to a series of parables that are unique to Luke. It is important to remember that they are not just some odds and ends that Luke throws in before Jesus reaches Jerusalem! Luke has made it clear that he is giving an orderly account to his friend Theophilus, and the message is simple and profound...

- A message critical for each of us as individuals and one that is world changing at the same time!
 - Jesus has come to save His people from their sins!
 - These people become the Church
 - And through the Church the Kingdom of Christ will fill the whole earth!

Luke has 3 major sections & here Jesus is on His final journey to Jerusalem at His appointed time . Jesus continues teaching along the way, continuing to reinforce the simple and profound message of His Kingdom, You will also see in the notes, that Luke makes a careful note of WHO Jesus is addresses directly five different times in less than 3 chapters. Last week brought a message directed at the multitudes which helped us better understand how we are to evangelize the lost

- This week we have three parables given to these religious leaders, calling them to repentance, & teaching us once again to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees!

All three are VERY familiar and as such we must be careful to see them in this proper context!

- There are many lessons, but we must NOT miss the central point Jesus wants to make with these parables

Luke sets the scene by pointing out that sinners and tax collectors were gathering around Jesus to listen... Good news indeed since Jesus has just called them to faith telling them to count the cost of discipleship as we saw last week.

- This is something that should have gladdened the hearts of these shepherds of Israel, like seeing a great hall filled to overflowing with those wanting to hear the Good News.

Sadly such was not the case with these Scribes & Pharisees who have become false shepherds in Israel... "the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners & eats with them."

Luke tells us that Jesus responds to them directly:

"So [Jesus] spoke this parable to them, saying:"

Jesus then tells the story of the shepherd who goes looking for the one lost sheep and the story of the woman who lost her coin. Because He is addressing these hardened religious leaders we must remember that the central point is intended to answer their murmuring

- **IF men go looking for lost sheep or women search for lost coins...
How can it be wrong for the Son of God to go looking for lost people?!**

These religious leaders whose ‘rules’ kept them from rejoicing when a man or woman was healed on the Sabbath now murmur when Jesus wants to save their souls!

- **Bad theology ALWAYS leads to very bad results!**

This complaining from the Pharisees and Scribes is not new: We saw it back in Luke chapter five where we read in verse 30 “And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying... “Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

- **Remembering the answer Jesus gave them then will help us avoid some common errors related to these parables:**

Luke 5:31 Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Obviously, Jesus was NOT saying that these hypocrites were healthy and not in need of the Savior. Here, Jesus is NOT implying in these new parables that these religious leaders, or any man or woman outside of Christ, is righteous or that all the children of Adam are NOT lost!

- **The focus of both these parables is the joy of finding what was LOST not on what remained in the possession of the owner!**

BUT with both parables we see Jesus presenting the incredible contrast to these grumbling Pharisees:

-- Something is lost

-- There is a great search

-- There is a happy finding

-- There is abounding JOY

In verse ten Jesus confronts them directly by saying, “I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over ONE sinner who repents!”

Back in Chapter 11, Jesus said in “blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!”

- **The point that Jesus has made in response to their complaints could not be clearer**

Jesus now tells one more parable to challenge them to properly respond:

It is perhaps the most famous of all the parables, one that can be used to teach many truths... BUT one that we must also remember was given TO these same Pharisees and Scribes

We know it as the parable of the Prodigal Son and I have played off of that for my sermon title of God's Prodigal people, because THAT is who Jesus is addressing!

- **In reality, we will see that in its proper context this parable should be better titled, the parable of the Two Lost Sons!**

First this parable repeats and humanizes the lesson Jesus has just taught: Now we are dealing with two sons, not sheep or coins. We see a son who is lost and then is found and there is much rejoicing, just as Jesus said there should be. Obviously there are many lessons to be learned: We see in the younger son the problem of all mankind, reminding us that we continue to labor under the sin of Adam.

The younger son demanded his portion before the proper time, just as Adam had grasped for the knowledge of good and evil before he was ready. Without the proper maturity and wisdom the attractions of the world consumed all that he had, expended we are told on riotous living: He was drawn to his own destruction much like I see moths going toward that blue light I have hanging in my yard that is surrounded by an electric grid!

God has blessed us here at Church of the King with many young people, so we should take special note of the important lessons we have here:

Young children must be taught to not leave their parents presence

Young adults must have the patience to learn wisdom and grow mature before they take on the full responsibilities of life on their own:

- **True maturity is shown by how the challenges of life are properly handled, NOT by charging out and showing that you can do things on your own!**

Young people must wait for God to reveal to them the marriage partner they are to enjoy for the rest of their lives: They should remain pure and use only proper Biblical means to find their spouse. Without patience and maturity, they can ruin what should be one of the most joyous part of life by grasping for cheap sexual thrills:

- **This is why warnings against sexual sins are so prominent in Proverbs**
- **It is ALSO why we see all the joys of a right relationship as Christ's love for the Church is described in the Song of Solomon**

Young married couples can bring on a lifetime of grief by not being patient in building a strong foundation for their relationship and looking to the wisdom of the older men and women that God puts in their lives.

We can have various problems in our vocations or homemaking if we are not patient, and counting the cost of what we are setting out to do:

Again, gaining wisdom from the older men and woman that God places in our lives is so important!

And yes, even in the church this can be a problem, if we refuse to learn the lessons of history, which is something Pastor Wilkins will focus on at camp next month.

- **It is easy to see why this parable is so popular and has probably had more sermons preached from it than any other!**

We can see in this story how God reaches out to His chosen ones, using even something like a famine to place them where they need to be so they are brought to repentance!

We have not even gotten to the loving father and forgiveness and the other lessons that can be learned

- **BUT even with all of these great lessons, we must remember where this parable is told and to whom Jesus is addressing it so that we don't miss the central message!**

Last week Jesus challenged the multitudes to become His disciples and now some are responding which upsets the religious leaders.

- **Jesus as He did with the first two parables, makes it clear that there should be MUCH rejoicing when a sinner repents!**

In the first two parables, we saw the Angels rejoice when just ONE sinner repents and now in the final parable we again see much celebration: Here we have a father who RUNS to his son showering him with hugs and kisses!

Then he commands, bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted calf here and kill it and let us eat and be merry! The contrast with the murmuring of these religious leaders could not be clearer!

Jesus has shown them that they are in sin and now the question is how will they respond... Jesus calls them to properly respond with the introduction of the second son in His parable:

- **This is NOT a story of one lost son and one faithful son... It is the parable of two lost sons.**

One went forth and sinned openly in the world, the other remained at home with a hardened heart:

- **The older son clearly represents the Scribes and Pharisees that Jesus is confronting.**

WE need to remember that people are just as likely to fall into his sin as we are the sin of the younger son!

- **One can keep outward appearances, attend church faithfully and not sin openly and still have a very hard heart!**

Am I being too hard on this older son? I think not... First, Jesus shows that he is in the same position as the hardened religious leaders the parable is addressed too: The son wants to know what all the raucous is about and it is clearly explained to him:

The proper response would have been to come on in and join the celebration because his lost brother had been found!

- **He does not and in fact we are specifically told that, “he was angry and would not go in!”**

Just as he did by running to his younger son, this loving father now comes to the oldest reaching out and encouraging him to do the right thing... This should remind us how Jesus was pictured as a mother hen!

How does this oldest son respond? First we see the pride of the Pharisees when he proclaims, “Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time.” This pride then turns to attack the loving father: “yet YOU never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends!”

- **The oldest son accuses him of being an ungrateful father:**
- **Does the father who Jesus presents in this story sound like an ungrateful father to you?**

The father’s response again takes us back to that picture of the mother hen... “Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.”

The father appeals to his son just as Jesus does to His covenant people which we will see again as He enters Jerusalem on Psalm Sunday. Jesus weeps over Jerusalem knowing that their destruction is coming shortly, despite all of God’s blessings.

Paul mentions these blessings in Romans chapter three right in the midst of proving that both Jew and Gentile are guilty before God:

3:1: “What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?

2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.

3 For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? 4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.”

- **God HAS been faithful down through the ages and the appointed time for Jesus the Messiah to be the sacrifice for sin in Jerusalem has come**
- **These Pharisees and Scribes that Jesus is confronting were in a position of great privilege just like the oldest son in the parable**

They had forgotten the purpose of their privileged position and could not bring themselves to rejoice when a sinner repented:

- **As was this oldest son, they were angry and refused to join in the celebration**

Jesus ends this parable abruptly and it leaves us asking the right question:

- **What did this oldest son do?**

Jesus wants these Scribes and Pharisees to confront this important question!

So must any who have hardened their hearts in a like manner so they cannot rejoice in the love and grace of God!

Again we end with another reminder of Biblical evangelism: There is a time to stop talking and turn the sinner over to the Holy Spirit!

Last week speaking to multitudes that included many Samaritans Jesus showed how we are to evangelize those outside of God's covenant who are searching

Now we have seen the need to also evangelize those with hardened hearts who reside within the covenant...

Let us be those who faithfully proclaim that the Messiah has come!

Communion Meditation:

Psalm 23: " The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever."