

Third Sunday in Lent – 2022

Saturday, 3/26 at 4:00 & Sunday, 3/27 at 9:00



Text: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 NAS-95

Lenten Wednesdays: Services 11 & 7; Meals 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: We have many problems in the world, but this is the worst: The vast majority believe that ➡right-doers will be welcomed into heaven, while ➡wrongdoers will be sent away. I realize that makes perfect sense, but, *according to God's word*, that is not true.

At the beginning of **Luke 15**, we discover who was in the audience of Jesus' hearers; *Jesus was speaking to THEM!*

1. **Audience:** ¹ **Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near [Jesus] to listen to Him.** ² **Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."** ³ **So He told them [all of them] this parable...** // Let's try to understand the two groups of people:

- Tax collectors and sinners – People who *knew* they had done wrong: They were **wrongdoers**; they believed **their sins** had disqualified them from heaven.**
- Pharisees and scribes – People who *thought* they were good: They were **right-doers**; they believed **their following of the rules** made them qualified for heaven.**

2. **The Younger Son Represents the Wrongdoers:** ¹¹ “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.” // The son to his father: *You are dead to me, so give me my share now!*
- a. His openly sinful life: 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.” // He rejected his father and chose his own way (Is. 53:6)☹.
- b. His consequences: ¹⁴ “Now when he had spent **everything** [all his share of the estate], a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be **impoverished** [yes, the way of sin has consequences]. 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** [unclean for Jews (Lev. 11:7), so a miserable job]. 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** [his so-called friends were gone].”
- c. His change of heart: ¹⁷ “But when he came to his **senses** [stepping back and seeing the big picture], 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.”’ // Even though some question the sincerity of his sorrow, *it seems genuine*: ▶My sin is against God and against you! ▶I have forfeited my position as your son! God knows the intent of every heart, see **1 Chronicles 28:9!**

d. His father's compassion, forgiveness, and joy: 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 [How do we know? He...], ...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.’** [It is obvious that the father immediately accepted his son's confession / repentance – because...] ²² **...the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him [for celebrating], and put a ring on his hand [showing authority] 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.”** // Note that the father NEVER mentioned a single sin of his son; instead, *the father did everything possible to fully welcome him back into the family!* Jesus did the same for all repentant tax collectors and sinners of His time *and wants to do the same for everyone today who repents!* **Jesus' sacrifice is MORE POWERFUL than every sin!**

3. **The Older Son Represents the Right-Doers:** ²⁵ **“Now his older son was in the field [doing the work of a good son], 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.’”** // The news was good – the younger son repented and came home! All should greatly rejoice, *but how did the older son react?*

- a. With anger: ²⁸ **“But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began pleading with him.*”** // His anger matched the anger of the Pharisees and scribes against the tax collectors and sinners. *He refused to celebrate his repentant brother.*
- b. With entitlement: 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.’** // The older son thought he deserved good things, *but his brother was undeserving.* When it comes to heaven, *no level of obedience can earn it!*
4. **The Father Represents God**: 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.*”** // When we know God the Father through our faith in Jesus, *then we have a great inheritance and should desire the same for everyone!*

Take Aways:

- **Truth** – Heaven is never earned or deserved!
- **Relevance** – The good are OUT; the repentant are IN!
- **Inspiration** – *Everyone is welcome through Jesus!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Father, make us thankful and merciful!

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