

Father and His Two Sons

Luke 15:11-12

Once upon a time a loving father had two sons. The older son was very religious. The younger son wasn't. Despite this big difference, they did have something in common.

They both were in deep need of grace.

The younger nonreligious son disgraced his father by saying, "Father, give me the share of the property that is coming to me." In this culture, a man's standing in the community was based on his land possession. By giving away one-third of his land before his death, not only was the father dishonored by son's request, but he also would lose his standing in the community.

Sons request, "Hey, old man, I wish you would go ahead and die already." Think of the pain and shame the father experienced.

Love and grace never force. They invite.

Luke 15:13

Sin City

(Myrtle Beach, Vegas, Miami) The country that did not believe in the one true God.

This far country is symbolic of a fractured relationship with God.

Luke 15:14-16

The son deserted his father. And for what? **Out of control living** that covered him in shame and guilt. His trip to **Sin City almost killed him.**

His dream life in Sin City turned out to be a nightmare. :(

He found himself working for a Heathen. **He not only hit, rock bottom, he came crashing through the floor. He was spiritually broke.**

Extreme spiritual and physical brokenness

Luke 15:17-19

He thinks that he is no longer worthy to be his father's son, so he will become a hired servant. This is important because an ordinary servant was in some sense a member of the family, but the hired servant could be fired on the spot.

He is a picture of what it looks like when a person is trying to be religious so as to be accepted by God.

Why do I say he tried to be religious?

Because he thought that if he became a hired servant, his father would receive him back.

Think about it, religion is always based on serving God to get in good, with God.

Religion is OUR attempt to please God through certain behaviors. We are basically saying,

“God, look at what I am doing. Is it good enough? Do you accept me now?”

A religious person thinks that if he can just behave well enough, God will accept and bless him. This is exactly what the younger son was doing.

Give real life example: God tells you to do something you do not want to do so, you do something else instead to try to be good enough for God.

On the outside, the religious activities look good, but on the inside, is your soul constantly asking God “Is this good enough to make up for my past sins? Are you pleased now?”

God is not going to be reached through the religion of man.

Luke 15:20-24

He reaches out to us in grace so we can know Him face-to-face. And it is the intimate grace encounter with Him that leads to a -Jesus way of life- "the Christ Life".

The younger son wanted to **pay for his sins – this is religion.** In the **“Christ Life,” Jesus pays the price for your sins – this is grace.**

He gives you His life so you have the power to be the person He created you to be.

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. (John 1:16)

Following Jesus is not a religion it is a way of Life.

It's about **God** who **reaches out to you in grace**, just **as you are**, so you can become like **someone you never thought you could be: His forgiven and deeply loved son, His forgiven and deeply loved daughter.**

Next scene of the story, the father sees his son while he was still a long way off. So the dad has been looking and waiting for his son to return home. The father loved the son greatly even though he didn't deserve it.

The father felt compassion for His son.

Did you know that God looks with eyes of compassion and waits for you to return home?

Even while you are in a far-off country living recklessly.

Maybe your **far-off country** is **sexual addiction**. Perhaps it's being a **workaholic**. Is it **lying** to protect yourself when you blow it? Maybe your far country is an **eating disorder** or an **emotional affair**.

The father ran to his son. This is very unusual behavior for a distinguished Middle Eastern father. Men of his stature did not run in this culture. So why did he run?

It is quite possible that he ran to protect his son.

According to Jewish custom, when a son disgraces and brings shame on his father through sinful behavior, the elders of the city would have intercepted the younger son before he reached his father. They would have taken him to the village center and smashed a pot at his feet, symbolizing his shame and disgrace.

This was a legal act of banishment.

The father's love for his son is so great he wants to prevent this from happening.

The father puts a **robe on him**, a **ring on his finger**, **shoes on his feet**, and prepared **meat for a feast**.

The **robe stands for honor**. He dishonored the father, yet the father honors the son. **That's grace.**

The **ring** meant the **father's authority** belonged to the son. The son disrespected his father's authority, yet the father gives it back to him as a gift. **That's grace.**

The **shoes** meant that the younger son was **his son**, not a servant! The son wanted to be a hired servant, but the father said, no, you will always be my son. **That's grace.**

Preparing the fattened calf for a **feast** meant that it was time to **celebrate!**

Despite the sin, the disrespect, and the shame, the loving father celebrates his son's return. That's grace.

It is grace that unleashes God's power and completely changes a person's life!

Perhaps you are asking, "**Where this brat's punishment?**"

His punishment took place in the far-off country.

Did you know that all heaven celebrates when a lost, dead son returns home to his Father's love (Luke 15:7, 10)

I find it interesting that the **father** totally **ignored** his **son's** rehearsed **speech** and desire to be a hired servant. As Jesus tells this story,

He is showing us that access to God is not found through religion, but through His grace.

Through HIS Grace.

Story is not over.

Luke 15:25-32

What does **the heart of the older brother** look like? **Religious.**

Beware of Religion.

The **religious brother** is **angry** that his father would celebrate the return of his younger brother. The older brother was a **model of external obedience**. He **faithfully "served"** his father for years. **Listen to his words again:**

Luke 15:29-30 - Wan wan wan

Like a true religious person, he boasts before God!

A religious person thinks he is doing God a favor by serving Him and that God owes him.

Why do I say this? The heart of the religious person is many time saying:

If I do this for God, I'm going to get this....

The recipient of grace boasts ONLY in the work of Jesus

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: **Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

Where is the LOVE & COMPASSION

Feeling another's pain.

Older brother was **just as spiritually dead** as the younger brother. He may have appeared on the outside to be the better son to the father, **but he was just as dead on the inside.**

The older brother had no experience with God's grace, so he could not give what he didn't have.

He only experienced empty religion, not a face-to-face love relationship with God.

The father tells his older son **"all that I have is yours."** Because the older brother did not serve his father out of love, he couldn't understand why his father was treating his brother with such extravagant love.

Both sons were in the far country but in different ways.

Both sons abandoned their father's love in different ways.

The older brother was religious and the younger brother was nonreligious.

Both were lost.

Both tried to save themselves, but only one let the Father save him.

Only one received grace.

Which is a picture of our relationship with God?

The older religious brother exiles himself outside the house.

People who love like the father are showing Christ to the world.

Are showing His Grace

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