

Lost.Found.Rejoice!

Good morning! If you need a Bible this morning, raise your hand and one of the ushers will put a Bible in it. If you don't own a Bible, you can keep that one. Once we're ready, let's turn to Luke 15 and then pray...

I am thankful to be here this morning with you. Thank you Pastor Sandy for such kind words, all glory to God. It is true, I was a homegrown calvary chapel kid! Much of my life has been lived within these 4 walls. I look out and see my church family, who came alongside my parents, in raising me to be a follower of Jesus. I mean my kindergarten teacher is sitting right over there! Thank you family for pouring into me!

Let me just say if you are new here to the church, or have been coming awhile but haven't yet got involved, **you have found a good thing here at Calvary Chapel!** Get plugged in and reap the benefits. You need Christian fellowship and discipleship, don't miss out. It's what your children and teenagers need desperately too.

It is an awesome thing to get to grow up with your friends in the church, and keep doing life together into adulthood. Though I must say, I can't look around the room without visualizing the faces of my friends that used to be filling those seats. Friends who grew up within these church walls too, but decided to take a different path when they could. Not just because they live elsewhere, but there are many of my friends who walked away from the faith.

I know some of you are reminded of these individuals too, because you are their parents. You have a prodigal son/daughter. Your little one that used to run the church halls every week, is now running further away from you and from God. All of us can relate to this. We all have people we love and care for that are still lost and separated from God. Maybe you are here today and you are currently in rebellion towards God. I am glad you are here no matter your situation, because Jesus has a story to share to us all regarding prodigals.

Jesus loves to use illustrations and stories to teach spiritual truths. He is a great storyteller. I imagine those crowding around Him on this day in Luke 15 were hanging on every word. The short story, or parable, we'll examine this morning is widely considered to be the greatest short story of all time!

I am sure we have all heard it! Even if you don't know much of the Bible, I would bet you've probably heard this story of the father and his two sons. What is it? The parable of the _____ (Prodigal Son). Though I don't really like that name for the story because well first, there are two sons that are both prodigals, and second, I believe Jesus makes it clear that the main character of the story is the father! Not sure what publisher decided to call it the "Parable of the Prodigal Son", but I'd rather call it the "Parable of the Perfect Father"... so I will call it that!

Every time I read this I am struck by the simple beauty of the parable. The tragic decisions of a rebellious son, the gracious father who welcomes that son home with loving arms, and the religious stick in the mud son who is still angry... It's an amazing story, and most importantly it displays the heart of God towards you.

So, Luke 15, beginning in verse 1, we gain context of the scene. Verse 1, [Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.](#) 2 [And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them."](#) 3 [So He spoke this parable to them...](#)

Jesus' audience is made of two very different groups of people. First we have the tax collectors and sinners, and second we have the religious Pharisees and scribes. Tax collectors were considered crooks and hated in biblical times, and not many people enjoy a tax collector today either! The original Greek here describes the "sinners" in verse 1 as "especially wicked" notorious sinners. These aren't your average Snellville, GA sinners, these were the lowest of the low life's...

And they were attracted to the words of Jesus! No one had treated them this way before! And the scribes and Pharisees could not stand Jesus for that! They believed that the righteous/religious should have no contact with the unclean sinners. They claimed that the unclean were unworthy of God's concern.

Jesus, being God, took a different approach to sinners, He ate with them! And the Pharisees grumbled and complained all the more! This crowd is forming and its split down the middle, on one side the rough edged people, that possibly reek of alcohol and sweat, and the other side full of religious snooty big heads, in their robes full of hot air!

Jesus recognizes that all members of the diverse crowd have the same underlying problem, they are all LOST. All separated from the love of the Father. And when something/someone is lost what naturally needs to happen? Well they need to be FOUND. Brought back and restored. Jesus tells us that His mission here on earth is to Save the Lost. Luke 19:10 Jesus says, "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

So He proceeds to share 3 parables with the crowd that day that share this same message: 1)Something was lost, 2) It was found, 3) and there was great Rejoicing once the lost was found! We have the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, and the one we will read today, the parable of the lost son, ALSO KNOWN AS the Parable of the Perfect Father.

How about we read it, join me in verse 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.

Right away we see the disrespectful attitude of the younger son known as the prodigal son. He comes to his father, and says "Dad, GIVE ME, give me my inheritance." Uhh dad is still alive though! Some of you here may have received an inheritance, but I highly doubt anyone asked for it before your loved one passed away! How insulting, though it was actually permitted then. A son could ask for his inheritance early before his father died, but it definitely wasn't customary!

It was cheeky to do this, and honestly not much different from just saying, "Dad I wish you were dead already..." Give me what's mine, because as we will see, he wants to leave... My life is being wasted under you dad, there's this whole big world out there waiting for me... and I don't want to wait until you die to get it... give me my inheritance so I can leave!

Wow. I'm sure the crowd with Jesus let out a collective gasp! That's harsh. But is this not the tempting message of the world... there's more out there for you to experience, don't stay trapped here under restrictions that God and your parents raise you in... won't know unless you try...

It's the same illusive message of the "if I only had!" mentality. If I only had that money, more sex, that relationship, those experiences, then I'd be happy! Why can't I have sex now before marriage, why can't I just be whatever I want to be/feel, I'm ready to run away! Like many young people today, and many old people, this younger son didn't want to be told what to do by his father or anybody.

So the father divided his livelihood to his sons. And verse 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.

The younger son loads up, and takes off! He travels as far as possible from his father, and began wasting his inheritance on prodigal living. What is prodigal living? What is a prodigal? The prodigal is the person who lives with wasteful excess, and extravagant living with lax morals. And this younger son, does just that! He becomes the life of the party, early on he has lots of money, which means he had lots of friends right... But when the money was gone, the so called friends were gone too... Wasting away what his father had given him, he lived for thrill and pleasure!

Mr. Money Bags was enjoying sin for a season, but it was never going to be enough... This wild fling he thought was just a party only left his life characterized we're told by waste and by want.

A famine comes and he can't handle it, because he's already wasted away all of his resources and security. And just when you thought it couldn't get any worse... it does! Verse 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.](#)

Probably the most tragic words in the story: "no one gave him anything." He lost his family. He lost all his money. He lost his job. He lost his friends. HE IS LOST! So lost that this young Jewish man [takes a job in a pig pen feeding pigs slop. He was so broke and broken, that he was willing to eat from the same trough as these pigs because of his hunger... but he couldn't.](#)

A pig to a Jewish person was an unclean animal! Feeding pigs was for Gentiles! I am sure the Jewish crowd there listening to Jesus was repulsed and let out a collective EWWW! I mean this is as low as it gets! The illusion of more, left him with nothing, alone in the pig pen. The prodigal was humbled. He thought life outside of his fathers house was going to be the answer to happiness but he only ended up depressed and cold and dirty...

The extreme nature of this is shocking! How does one go from complete security to being completely LOST? [Little by Little.](#) You may think your small steps in the wrong direction are insignificant, but before you know it, you've gone so far that you don't know where you are anymore and you're lost all alone.

Trust me, The young man would have never guessed he would've ended up in the pit slopping hogs! But he did. A good friend of mine shared an illustration with me that exemplifies this perfectly. Let me explain the scenario, [we have two sailboats, a purple sailboat, and a green sailboat. They both set off to sea at the same starting point, heading in the same direction. The purple sailboat stays on the intended path. But the green sailboat deviates by a small angle, say 5 degrees, from the intended path. Over time the purple stays on the path, and the green continues at a 5 degree angle.](#)

[After a short distance, the positions of the two sailboats will be very close to each other. The deviation between them will be minor, hardly noticeable. As both sailboats continue on their paths, the small initial difference in their directions leads to a growing separation between them. Over time and distance, the gap becomes increasingly significant. Eventually, they end up in drastically different locations, potentially miles and miles apart.](#)

ONE MORE BOAT SLIDE HERE. [Friends, this is how you and I end up in the pig pen paying the consequences for our sins. This is how you end up LOST. When we can still see God's intended path \(will\) for our lives nearby, the small decisions we make stepping away from God seem justifiable. "I'm not lost" "I can handle this amount of this path over here, I'm not addicted, I'm close enough with God" And before you know it you're justifying your actions and blind to the fact that you're drifting further away from God.](#)

But since you have a conscience that knows right and wrong, you have to depend on some sedative/jolt to distract you from the truth and attempt to live in bliss. But it only works for so long until you wake up and realize you're alone and no one wants to give you anything. I know this is true because I have lived this way!

High schoolers in the room, and young adults, this is critical for us especially! What is the trajectory for your life based on your daily decisions? IF left unchanged, where are your compounding decisions leading you? Closer to God's will, or further away? Change directions now and save yourself lots of trouble in the future!

I'd have to guess someone in the crowd that day shed tears for the lost young man. The prodigal in the story was emblematic of the tax collectors and sinners present with Jesus that day. Many had felt the same way this younger son did: alone and no one gave them anything. The Pharisees would have thought this is the end of the story, "let this be a lesson to all unclean sinners, you will die alone and there is no hope!"

Not true, because verse 17 holds some of the most glorious, hopeful words in the story of the prodigal: "But when he came to himself, (CAME TO HIS SENSES, SOMEONE IN THE CROWD CHEERS YES! too much fun) 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." '

I love that, it says he came to himself, as though he was not really himself before! Wow. Realize when a sinner is in the depths of their sin, both in the practice of it and consequences of it, they are really not themselves... that's amazing!

That you can go to someone who is lost in the world and say "hey bro this is not you! You need to come back to yourself! God has a higher calling/purpose for you and a greater love for you than you even have for yourself. You're only out here identifying yourself with your sin! I'm horrible person, no better than a pig!"

God says, "No I think of you as something greater, you are made in the image of God! That's who you are!" Realize in his disobedience, the younger son was not himself. The prodigal wasn't the real man, the real man was the son who needed to return to his father. What a wake up call!

There is no trace of arrogance in this prodigal man, he is repentant. We can know this because he bears the two evidences of true repentance: a changed mind, and a change of direction. He doesn't just think about going back to dad, he gets up in verse 20 and goes. He changed his mind and agreed with God about his sin, and then his feet followed. Father, I have sinned.

It's interesting, last time he spoke to his father, he said GIVE ME, I want it my way, but now this son plans to ask his father MAKE ME, have your way with me. His mindset is completely changed.

Verse 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, [f]'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.

Praise the Lord! The whole crowd around Jesus is weeping at this point and jumping for joy! "That's the most beautiful story I've ever heard!" Picture the scene. Based on the verses we just read it's likely not a day goes by where he doesn't think of him and hope for his return. He has a routine of going out and sitting on the porch every night to pray for his son, and look for him. We're told that the father saw him first!

At a great distance, the father recognized his son's walk. He looked rough, probably smelled like a pig from a mile away. But as soon as he saw him, he began to run to his son! This would be unthinkable in this culture! No patriarch father of the house would run, that would be undignified! The father likely would've remained seated for the son to fall at his feet, but no not this father!

He hikes up his robe above his wobbly old knees and throws all dignity out of the window! That's my son! And he wasn't running out there to slug him once real hard in the jaw in judgment, but he ran to go and smother him with love and compassion!

The prodigal might have been expecting judgment! Oh no dad is running at me, great I'm a dead man, why did I come back, I can outrun him, what was I thinking, he's rehearsing his speech, Father I have sinned against heaven and your sight... He's bracing for impact assuming his father

has been waiting to punish and condemn him for wasting his life and losing it... Until they get close enough and he sees his father's eyes filled with compassion and tears, and his arms open wide to embrace!

Father falls on the younger sons neck and the original text says he kisses him continually, they're both sobbing. HE IS FOUND! The son is trying, "Dad, I've got to say something, Father I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, please make —" The gracious father cuts him off and doesn't let him finish, he knows his son has repented, the fact that he came back reveals this!

The father did more than accept his prodigal son back, he gave his son the best robe and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. they brought out the fatted calf to slaughter it and throw a party! The fatted calf was saved for special occasions, and that night they were going to have the best steaks of the year! All the fat marbling through the meat, making it so much more delicious!

He rejected his father and ran off to start a new life, but the moment he returned not only did his father accept him and demonstrate love and affection towards him, but he immediately restores him to the position of son. And threw the best block party they ever had thrown! For his son who was dead is alive again, he was lost and is found!

But the story isn't over yet, we still have one more prodigal son to deal with, verse 25... 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.' "

The scene shifts in Jesus' story to the older brother. This older brother never left his father's home. He didn't waste away his inheritance, he actually stayed and assumed the family business!

By all appearances, it looks like this is the model son! We're told he spent his years serving his father, and never once disobeying his command. But the lesson we can learn from the older brother is this: it is possible to labor in your father's field, but not be anywhere close to your father's heart.

As you can tell, the older brother is emblematic of the Pharisees and scribes. Just like the older brother, the Pharisees were doing all the right things for all the wrong reasons. And the older brother was ungrateful and angry at his father, like the Pharisees anger problems! This son is so angry he pitches a fit, and disrespects dad and stays outside says "I'm not going into the party wahh! Dad has to come to me talk!"

In verse 30, did you catch what he said? He said this "son of yours" ruined things... HE didn't say this "brother of mine".. He won't even acknowledge him as a brother! I've done everything right, I never messed up but I never got a young goat to have fun with my friends! IT'S NOT FAIR! Let this be a lesson for us... because **so often we are ungrateful for what we don't have, rather than grateful for what we do have...** "You have that and I don't have it"

Shut your mouth... God will take care of you, He knows what you need! Instead of being ungrateful and obsessed with comparison, be grateful, be merry, be happy! Some people are professional complainers, some Christians! always discontent about something! What do you think your complaints reveal about your God to other people? Be careful you're representing God...

This older brother has become so hardened and discontent, that he complains about the grace his father shows to his own sinful brother “your son wasted his life with prostitutes and you let him back home and throw him a party now!”... He’s like the religious Pharisee or the religious church member, who looks down his/her nose at the grace of God being poured out on sinners.

“How could you let a person that looks like that into the church?” Where else should they be? We let you in! They let me in! Send all the prodigals here to Calvary Chapel! Where else?! We’ve got a bunch of FOUND prodigals here who know how to throw a party with music and dancing in the Father’s house! The more the merrier...

Don’t miss the heart of the Father towards his oldest son, He says, son, my child, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It’s as if he says, I love you too! The father deals so graciously with his older prodigal son, doesn’t rebuke him, but says all I have is yours, but you’ve been near me physically, but son you don’t understand my heart.

Why did you keep laboring in the field, when you could’ve been out there finding your lost brother.... bringing him back home? My son, that’s what I have longed for the most...

It’s quite the twist at the end of the story: one son rejected the father for fleshly reasons lost his life, but returned to be redeemed by the grace of his father. And then the older son, seeing this all play out, rejects the father’s party because the grace his father showed was unfair...

I trust that God has been speaking to you as we’ve been going through this story. And I’m sure you see why I called this the parable of the perfect father. The way the father deals with his two sons, displays the heart of God towards you. The God of heaven loves you this way!

The parable illustrates that all mankind can be divided into two basic categories. Not believers and unbelievers, not righteous and the unclean... Instead, it’s **Jesus and prodigals.** NEXT SLIDE Romans 3:23 says, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

The older brother might not have seen himself as a prodigal. His life was just as wasted, if not more so than the younger son. It’s obvious a person has lost their life when they dive deep into worldly immorality and sin. But this story shows us it’s just as easy to lose my life, serving God for all the wrong selfish reasons and completely misunderstand the heart of God for sinful man.

But there’s good news for all of us: “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” No matter how we are lost, or how lost we have become, He loves us, looks for us, and if we repent come to Him and turn to Him, He will redeem us back as sons and daughters of God! We’ve been FOUND!

Don’t forget the pattern though: 1)LOST 2)FOUND 3) Now it is time to REJOICE! The Father will throw a huge party for you, celebrating your return home!

In the other two parables Jesus shared that day, He gives more insight on this too. After the lost coin was found, Jesus closed that parable by saying, **Luke 15:10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.** BRO, we might be able to throw a decent party at Calvary Chapel, but it won’t come close to the party God will have in heaven as soon as you are found!

Every time a lost sinner comes back to Jesus and repents, is redeemed, and restored, all of heaven erupts in praise and cheering for that one single sinner! How amazing is that! I imagine there’s a big screen like this one but bigger, and as soon as you came to back to God, in big letters across the screen it says: **FOUND: “_____”** All of the angels and saints shout praise the Lord! Cheering and dancing and singing bringing glory to God! Martinelli’s being popped off left and right, it’s the best party ever held!

And that can happen for you! Your very own personal celebration in heaven can occur this morning. The God of the universe loves you that much. You thought you were lost, alone, and no better than a pig, but all this time God knew where you were and has been waiting for you to choose to come back.

God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He didn't leave you out here to be lost, He sent out His search and rescue team to find you, His name is Jesus Christ.

Yes, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, but those who put their faith in Jesus are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Friend, God is not waiting to judge you, He sent His Son on the cross to die for you, and make a way for you to escape the penalty of your sin.

Maybe you have a prodigal son or daughter, There is hope for them. Pray for them to come to their senses, and be ready to welcome them home. Maybe you've been running away from God for a while now, will he still take me back? Yes, He will, and He will run to you to embrace you. Maybe you've been sailing off of God's intended path for your life and you're starting to become lost, will he take me back? Yes, He will, and He will fall on your neck and shower you with kisses, and restore.

We think we have to come to God and over-explain everything, God I did this and God I did this and I did this and this — and God is like excuse me a second, can we get a robe, ring, fatted calf, some sandals, My son is home! My daughter is home.

He already knows you, and when you repent have a change of mind and change of direction, he will immediately restore you to new life! If you need to make that decision to come back to God, let's do it right now in this opportunity. With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, I want you to raise your hand high So we can pray together and get right with our Heavenly Father.

If that's you, come back now.

Let's pray.

PARTY!! And if you are a son/daughter of God stay in His will! Stay close to the heart of God in obedience, and bring more lost prodigals to the party.