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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Luke 15:20-24
Lesson #4
The Father's Heart
5/24/2026

1

The context

- **Luke 15 consists of 3 parables.**
 The lost sheep vs.1-7
 The lost coin vs.8-10
 The lost son vs.11-32
- **They each make the same point.**
 The **joy** of "finding" a **lost & valued** object.
- **Vs.20-24 focuses on the father's heart.**
 The prodigal son provides the **OCCASION** to expose:
 1. **the heart of the Father - vs.20-24**
 2. **the heart of the Brother - vs.25-32**


2

- **The meaning of "prodigal"**
 Extravagant use of resources (wasteful)
- **The term can be applied to the son, the father, and the brother.**

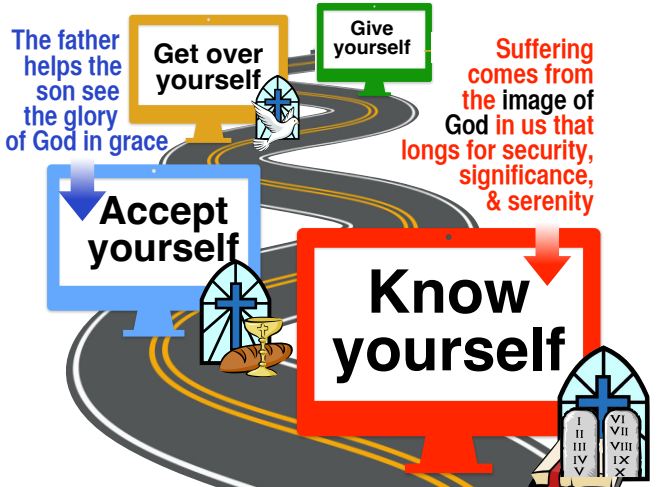
The **son's**, **SADNESS** because of his **carnality**

The **father's**, **GLADNESS** expressed in his **charity**

The **brother's**, **MADNESS** because of his **comparison**



3



The father helps the son see the glory of God in grace

Get over yourself

Give yourself

Accept yourself


Know yourself

Suffering comes from the image of God in us that longs for security, significance, & serenity

4

Pain

not comfort is the door to wisdom in knowing ourself and God



Hebrews 5:8
 "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

Romans 5:3-5
 "3 And not only this, but we also **exult in our tribulations**, knowing that tribulation brings about **perseverance**; 4 and perseverance, proven **character**; and proven **character**, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the **love of God** has been poured out within our hearts **through the Holy Spirit** who was given to us."

2 Corinthians 1
 "3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... 4 who **comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those** who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."

James 1
 "2 **Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials**, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces **endurance**. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, **lacking in nothing**."

5

Luke 15

"20 And 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, and **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.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly **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 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**."

6

Note:

Luke 15

“²⁰ And he got up and **came to his father**.”

- The son had only revealed that he was **coming home** (not that he was morally righteous).
- The issue was not centered on:
 - delinquency so much as **direction**.
 - reform so much as **return**.
 - atonement so much as **address**.

God’s focus is not as RULE CENTERED as it is RELATIONSHIP CENTERED!

7

Note:

Luke 15

“²⁰ ... But **while he was still a long way off**, his father saw him, and **felt compassion** for him, and **ran and embraced him, and kissed him**.”

- The son was **only on his way home**.
- The father’s response was prodigal
 - contrary to the Mosaic Law’s culture.
 - empathetic from the heart.
 - expressed in dramatic ways.

God’s heart (feeling) in Christ is not CONDEMNATION but COMPASSION!

8

Love is not passive.

(The father runs to welcome his son.)

- Love takes the **initiative but with wise timing**.
- Love rejoices in the truth.
- Love has a **‘body language’**.

9

Love is not passive.

(The father runs to welcome his son.)

John 4 (The woman at the well)

“¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that **I shall give him shall never thirst**; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”

10

John 1

“¹⁷ For the Law was given through Moses; **grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ**.

¹⁸ No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, **He has explained Him**.”

John 3:17

“**For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world**, but that the world should be saved through Him.”

God’s heart is displayed in the Gospel of Christ more than the Law of Moses (which was to point us to the Cross).

11

Jesus’ example (as the image of God) was what led to his crucifixion.

- calling a “tax collector”(Matthew) an Apostle. Mk.2:17
- forgiving a sinful woman who washed his feet. Lk.7
- speaking publicly with a Samaritan woman. Jn. 4
- inviting himself to a tax collector’s house. Lk.19:5
- putting charity above religious rules. Matt.9:13
- welcoming children, the weak, & neglected.
- saving the criminal on the cross. Lk.24:43
- touching “unclean” lepers etc. Mk.1:40-45
- welcoming the adulterous woman. Jn. 8
- spending most of his time in Galilee.



12

Note:

Luke 15

"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.'²² But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly **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 **fattened calf**, kill it, and let us eat and **celebrate**;"

- The **son sees himself as worthless** -
- unacceptable, excluded, shameful.
- The **father sees the son as a king** -
- to be restored, not a sinner to be reformed.
- returning from a military victory not a defeat.

**God's glory rests in HIS IMAGE WITHIN US
not in our faith or moral virtue!**

13

Note the father's response

The father could have said:

"You have a lot of nerve to show your face around here, having mocked the way we raised you."

"You have really hurt your mother and me and things will never be quite the same."

"You will be expected to work to repay what you have squandered away."

"You will enter rehab immediately and will be on probation for two years."

The father expresses himself to the son with **action along with words.**

14

God is forgiving and **not punitive.**

(The father never even mentions the son's failures.)

- God is **calling us to be fully human.**
- God is not **shocked by our falling short.**
- God is **patient in helping us see the truth about what it means to be human.**
- God does not **demand perfection from us but imputes holiness to us, in Christ.**

15

Note:

Luke 15

"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.**"

- The Father is glorified by the son's coming home to life with the family.
- The son bears the Father's image but:
 - has lost sight of the wealth that come with it.
 - needs to find "life" - what it means to be human.

**The issue was not
"INDEPENDENCE" (LOST) but
BEING TRUE TO OURSELVES (FOUND)!**

16

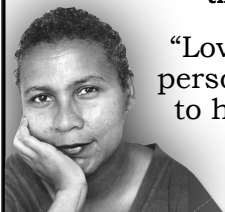
The deepest desire of our heart is to be at serenity, security, significance, & survival.

John 1:4

"In Him was life, and the life was **the Light of mankind.**"

John 5

"³⁹ You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is **these that bear witness of Me**; ⁴⁰ and you are **unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.**"



"Love is moving toward another person's soul with a commitment to help them reach the deepest desire of their heart."

Bell Hooks

17

Love NOT LAW 
**is the power that drives and marks
God's covenant people!**

Jeremiah 31:33

"I will put my law in their inward parts, and **write it in their hearts.**"

Romans 13:8

"Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who **loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.**"

Hebrews 8:13

"When He said, "A **new covenant**", He has made the first **obsolete**. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is **ready to disappear.**"

Galatians 5:18

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are **not under the Law.**"

1 John 4:19

"We love because **He first loved us.**"

Galatians 3
"²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our **tutor to lead us to Christ**, that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are **no longer under a tutor.**"

2 Corinthians 5:14

"For the **love of Christ controls us,**"

18

**Love cares
without being possessive.**

(The father let the son go.)

- God gives us **FREEDOM** so that we might learn what the Prodigal son learned.

Hebrews 12:6

“For whom the Lord loves **He disciplines**”

- God gave freedom to Israel for the same reason.

Hosea 5:15

“In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me”



19

**As a parent when should I
let a child make decisions?**

- When I **accept** a child where they are and **model** what they **should & can be**.
- When I **trust** that the child is not in imminent, mortal, danger.
- When I have the **faith** to risk the power of love and of pain.
- When I **show** a child how to learn from mistakes.

20

**Because love is not fearful,
it is not overly protective.**

(The father did not rescue the son.)

- **Wisdom** knows the **power of pain** and is **not afraid to allow it**.
- **Wisdom** knows the **power of love** and is **not afraid to lavish it**.
- **Wise parents** are neither **bodyguards** nor **lifeguards**, but are **swimming instructors**.

21

Love is forgiving and not punitive.

(The father not only pardons the son's sin but also restores his dignity.)

Romans 4:5

“But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who **justifies the ungodly**, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,”

Romans 8

“1 There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has **set you free from the law of sin and of death.**”

22

**The father's joy affirms
the son's worth &
father's heart.**

A healthy Christian congregation is **relationally oriented**, not rule oriented.

1. It treats love as a **noun & verb**.
2. It speaks the **truth** in love.
3. It trusts the **power** of love.
4. It links **life** with love.

23

**The father plays important
roles in the life of the son.**

1. He offered a home to remember.
2. He lets the son discover himself.
3. He was a model of God's grace.
4. He removed the son's shame.

**His joy reveals the son's
worth & father's heart.**

24

Understanding the Father

- The father represents God in this parable.
- His actions are dramatic and unexpected.
- He shows that we are received when we come to him, apart from our moral record.
- He shows us the heart of God, the Gospel, and the Spirit of Christ in us.
- He shows us how to respond to others.

Galatians 6:2

“Bear ye one another’s burdens,
and thus fulfill the law of Christ.”

25

Ephesians 4

“11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 **for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;** 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but **speaking the truth in love,** we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

26



27