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THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Luke 15:25-32
Lesson #14
The Religious spirit
12/29/2019

THE PARABLES OF JESUS


The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-31

1

“You and I do not see things as they are.
We see things as we are.”

A short commentary on the parable of the prodigal son

Henry Ward Beecher



2

Context

Luke 15

“¹ Now all the **tax-gatherers and the sinners** were coming near Him to listen to Him. ² And both the **Pharisees and the scribes** began to grumble, saying, ‘**This man** receives sinners and eats with them.’ ³ So He told them this parable, saying, . . .”


- The **prodigal son** represents the “tax-gathers and the sinners”.
- The **father** represents Jesus, “this man” who receives sinners and eats with them.
- The **older brother** represents the “Pharisees and the scribes”.

3

The Parable of Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

1. The Prodigal runs away to a distant land.
2. He becomes destitute through worldly living.
3. This brings him to repent and return home.
4. His father graciously receives him back.



But the story is not over.

4

Luke 15

“²⁵ Now his older son was in the field, 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.’ ²⁸ But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.”

5

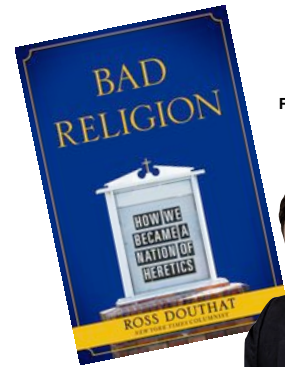
“²⁹ But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and *yet* you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; ³⁰ but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ 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.’”

6

As Messiah, Jesus was **expected** to comfort and encourage God’s covenant people in their stand against the evil of the world.

What he did was **go after** the religious establishment for its hypocrisy.

Luke 15 and Romans 2 make the same point.



Ross Douthat
N.Y. Times



7

What should the prodigal son have done?

Stay at home

- Recognize inheritance as a stewardship.
- Acknowledge the father’s ownership.
- Respect the importance of virtue.
- Live life in service to the father.
- Obey the father’s rules consistently.



8

The Prodigal had an older brother who:

Stayed at home

- Recognized inheritance as a stewardship.
- Acknowledged the father’s ownership.
- Respected the importance of virtue.
- Lived life in service to the father.
- Obeyed the father’s rules consistently.



9

JUSTICE ISSUES

- Was the father unfair to the older brother?
- Does the older son have a just point in his complaint?



10

The older brother is awakened:

- not when the Prodigal leaves home and squanders his inheritance.
- nor when the Prodigal repents and comes home.
- **but only when the father’s grace is revealed.**

He failed to share the grace and joy which was the father’s glory.

Jesus and the Apostles consistently criticized a **“religious spirit”**.

11

“With or without religion,
good people can behave
well and bad people can
do evil; but for good people
to do evil – that takes
religion.” (ISIS)

Steven Weinberg
(theoretical physicist)



12

“Of all bad
men religious
bad men are
the worst.”

C.S. Lewis



13

Characteristics of the older brother's “religious spirit”

a distortion
of God's Law and His Spirit

- Scorekeeping
- Superficial
- Separatist



14

1. “scorekeeping spirit”

“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;

15

Luke 18

“⁹ And He also told this parable to certain ones who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:** ¹⁰ Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a **Pharisee**, and the other a **tax-gatherer**.

¹¹ The **Pharisee** stood and was praying thus to himself, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. ¹² I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’

¹³ But the **tax-gatherer**, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”

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Some signs of a “scorekeeping spirit”

- Fairness is based on performance
 - performance is based on **rules**.
 - to keep score you must eliminate all “gray” areas.
- **Pride / Jealousy prone.**
 - sense of entitlement
 - blame and shame oriented

17

“There are only two kinds of men: the righteous, who believe themselves sinners; the rest, sinners who believe themselves righteous.”

Blaise Pascal



18

“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.’”

The older son lost nothing.

He just did not want the prodigal to get anything he hadn’t earned.

19

John 21

“²¹ So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, ‘Lord, and what about this man?’ ²² Jesus said to him, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!’”

If God’s kingdom is a “quid pro quo” game we tend to keep score to be sure it’s fair.

20

John 21

“²¹ So Peter seeing him said to Jesus, ‘Lord, and what about this man?’ ²² Jesus said to him, ‘If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me!’”

In God’s kingdom not all are treated the same way some see this as unfair.

21

Matthew 20

“¹ For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who was the master of a household, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. . . . ¹¹ When the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise each received a denarius. When they received it, they murmured against the master of the household, ¹² saying, ‘These last have spent one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat!’ ¹³ But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Didn’t you agree with me for a denarius?’ ¹⁴ Take that which is yours, and go your way. It is my desire to give to this last just as much as to you. ¹⁵ Isn’t it lawful for me to do what I want to with what I own? Or is your eye evil, because I am good?’ ¹⁶ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.”

22

**the bad news
God is
not fair!**

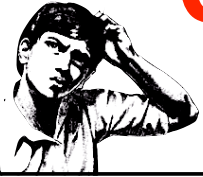
**the good news
God is
not fair!**



23

A scorekeeping spirit reacts to grace

given to others.



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2. “superficial spirit”

Luke 15:30

“but when this son of yours came,
who has **devoured your wealth
with prostitutes, . . .**”

The older brother is preoccupied
with the father’s wealth and rules
**rather than a relationship
with the father.**

25

2. “superficial spirit”

Matthew 23:27

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,
hypocrites! For you are like
whitewashed tombs which on the
outside appear beautiful, but
inside they are full of dead men’s
bones and all uncleanness.”

Matthew 5:3

“Blessed are the **poor in spirit,**”

26

Some signs of a “superficial spirit”

- Cultural image focussed.
- Majoring on minors.
- Temporal blessings entitled.
- Old Covenant emphasis.

27

Matthew 23

“¹ Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes
and to His disciples, ² saying, “The
scribes and the Pharisees have seated
themselves in the chair of Moses; . . . ⁵
But they do all their deeds to be noticed
by men; for they broaden their
phylacteries, and lengthen the tassels of
their garments. ⁶ And they love the place
of honor at banquets, and the chief seats
in the synagogues, ⁷ and respectful
greetings in the market places, and being
called by men, Rabbi.”

28

“Self righteousness
belongs to the
narrow-minded.”

Toba Beta
Indonesian writer



29

3. “separatist spirit”

“²⁸ But he became angry and **was not willing to go in**; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him. . . .

“³⁰ but when **this son of yours** came, who has devoured **your** wealth with prostitutes, . . .

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.”

30

Some signs of a “separatist spirit”

- **Black & white worldview.**
“good and “evil” (not gray)
- **Spiritual class system.**
“US and “them”
- **A spiritual “civil war” spirit.**

31

10 signs of a “Religious spirit”

1. Keeping score for credits & demerits.
2. A sense of spiritual entitlement.
3. Uneasy with grace given to other sinners.
4. Rules & justice oriented life.
5. Superficial standards that can be managed.
6. A segregated spiritual “class system.”
7. Rejoice at the failure of outsiders.
8. Tendency to judge others by our strengths.
9. Struggle with shame when we fail.
10. Motivate with fear and guilt more than love.

32

An “older brother’s” church:

- **Promotes** an Old Covenant culture!
- **Expectations** - ministers minister, the congregation congregates!
 - Look good, Keep busy, Feel happy!
 - Show up, Shut up, and Cough up!
 - Punctuate all theological doctrines with (!)
- **Control** - monitor and use guilt and fear (not love) to motivate!
- Major on **minors**!

33

What can I do to change?

- Keep the main thing, the main thing.
- Commit myself to be a BE-ATTITUDE disciple.
- Keep Jesus’ attitude as a model.
- Know myself, accept myself, forget about myself, give myself.
- Adopt “zero tolerance” for pride and shame.
- View failure as a spiritual opportunity for insight for a new beginning, rather than the end.

34

THE LAW

was given to convict
not to confirm.

Romans 5:20a



It is to produce
shame not pride.



35

SHAME

is the normal path
to the Cross!

Romans 5:20b



Pride is a common
block in the path.



36

Love

is the power that drives
God's Kingdom!

2 Corinthians 5:14



Broken hearts are
empowered by it.



37

"You and I do not see
things as they are. We
see things as we are."

The challenge of
the Parable of the Prodigal son

What do our
perceptions tell us
about who we are?

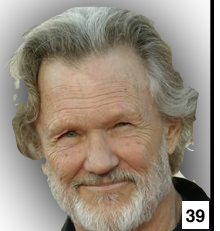
38

Why me Lord?
What have I ever done
To deserve even one
Of the pleasure I've known
Tell me Lord
What did I ever do
That was worth lovin' you
For the kindness you've shown

Try me Lord
If you think there's a way
I can try to repay
All I've takin' from you
Maybe Lord
I can show someone else
What I've been through myself
On my way back to you

Lord help me Jesus
I've wasted it so help me Jesus
I know what I am
But now that I know
That I needed you so help me Jesus
My souls in your hand

Kristoffer Kristofferson



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