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Oaks Early Risers Bible Class

The Oaks Baptist Church
Grand Prairie, Texas

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Called to Return Luke 15:11-24

Lesson Background and Introduction

Today's text, one of the most beloved (and misapplied) of Jesus' parables, is one of a series that he spoke in response to his opponents. Jesus was surrounded by publicans (tax collectors), hated in his time as collaborators with the oppressive Roman Empire. Sinners of various stripes flocked to Jesus. None of this sat well with religious leaders opposed to Jesus. They grumbled about his associating with such people, and especially about his eating with them. With Luke 15:1-2 noting the above, Luke 15:3 marks the beginning of Jesus' response. That response consists of three parables, each about the recovery of something: a lost sheep (15:4-7), a lost coin (15:8-10), and an errant son (15:11-32). When Jesus used parables to address Jewish leaders, the stories were often meant to be "in your face" tweaks aimed at their hypocrisy. In the parable told at his house, Simon the Pharisee was to understand that he was the debtor who "loves little" (Luke 7:47). "The chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders" were to know that the parable of the tenants was directed at them (Mark 11:27; 12:1-12). The three parables in Luke 15 are similar: they were meant to be rebukes of pious leaders who disdained Jesus because he "welcomes sinners" (Luke 15:2).

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

The parable of the prodigal son highlights the love and concern of the heavenly Father toward all people. He longs for unbelievers to realize His compassion and become a part of His family. The principles of this parable also apply to Christians who turn from their faith for any number of reasons. The loving heavenly Father wants anyone apart from Him to repent and return.

Blinded by Selfishness - Jesus started this parable by describing a father with two sons. The younger demanded his share of the father's inheritance. It was customary for the father to leave his estate to his children, but at his death. In this case, the younger son, motivated by foolishness and greed, demanded his share immediately. The loving father allowed the rebellion, gave the son his share, and let him go. The son traveled far away from home, lived a wild extravagant lifestyle, and depleted all his funds. Around this same time, a severe famine arose in the area. This son, who at one time had everything, found himself starving and took a job feeding swine, animals unclean to Jews.

Awakened by Circumstances - While working this degrading job, the son finally saw himself and his situation clearly. He recalled the advantages of home and decided to return, specifically saying, "I'm going back to my father." He attempted to prepare a speech confessing the error of his ways, humbly asking his father to make him a hired hand since he felt unworthy to be recognized as his son.

A Father's Warm Welcome - As soon as the son came close to home, the compassionate father saw him coming and ran to his child. This act was completely out of character for the head of the household in biblical times. Fathers usually walked like royalty, never running like an athlete or a servant. Yet, this father laid aside customary practices, picked up his robes, and ran as fast as possible to meet his son. The father smothered his child with kisses, and when the prodigal attempted to recite his speech, the father refused to listen. Instead, he immediately started the process of full restoration of sonship. He ordered the servants to bring a robe, ring, and shoes, and kill a calf for a celebration. The father wanted to publicly honor his child,

God's Amazing Love - Through this story Jesus wanted those listening back then, and those reading this account today, to hear God's affectionate voice: "I love you, I'm anxiously waiting for you. Turn back to Me, so I can welcome you again as My child, and celebrate your return."

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

When a Christian returns after falling into sin and being separated from the fellowship of God's people, we should convey love, acceptance, and a desire to see him fully restored

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK:

Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone;
As Thou has sought, so let me seek
Thy erring children lost and lone

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

So that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow

(2 Cor 2:7 NKJV)

from "Our Daily Bread", July 23, 2000)

Series: Discipleship & Mission

UNIT: Call To Ministry

NEXT WEEK

Called to Mission

(Matthew 10:1-15)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

The Sin - Rebellion (15:11-13)

Rebellion usually starts with impatience

Impatience for wanting what we don't have
(James 4:2)

Impatience because we expect great miracles when
simple things will help (2 Kings 5:11-12)

Impatience for what we call fairness (Luke 9:54)

Impatience to do what we want and disregarding
God's priority (Luke 10:40)

Rebellion thinks we know what's best for us

Youthful thinking and decision making sometimes
leads us to rebellion (Ps 25:7)

Rebellion by trying to follow the desires of our
heart (Eccl 11:9)

Rebellion through arrogance (Deut 1:43)

Rebellion through following our corrupt and sinful
nature (2 Peter 2:10)

Rebellion through trying to run from God (Jonah
1:1-3)

Rebellion ends in loss

Loss of life and possessions (Num 16:30)

Loss of forgiveness (Ex 23:20-21)

Loss of God's intimacy (Isa 63:10)

Loss of God's blessings (Lev 26:14-20)

The Repentance - Coming To Our Senses (15:14-19)

Repentance begins with an unfulfilled need

The need to clear ourselves of guilt (2 Cor. 7:11)

The need to find satisfaction (Amos 4:6)

The need to enjoy the fruits of our labor (Haggai
1:6)

Repentance causes us to rethink our situation

Rethinking our decisions that got us in the
situation (Jonah 2:7-10)

Rethinking our attitude of pride (Job 40:1-5)

Rethinking our understanding of who God is (Acts
9:3-6)

Repentance results in a humbled changed mind

Humbled by seeing our weakness (Luke 22:59-62)

Humbled by being made to feel ashamed (2 Thess
3:14-15)

Humbled by knowing that God's grace is sufficient
(2 Cor 12:7-10)

Humbled by a changed lifestyle and service
(Philem 10-16)

The Forgiveness - A Reconciling Father (15:20-24)

Forgiveness starts with God's compassion

Compassion because God is slow to anger and
abounds in love (Psalm 86:15)

Compassion that God longs to provide (Isaiah
30:18)

Compassion that resulted in us not being
consumed (Lament. 3:22)

Compassion that causes God to relent from what
we deserve (Joel 2:13)

Forgiveness involves confession

Confession that confirms guilt (1 Chron. 21:8)

Confession that agrees with God's view (Psalm
32:5)

Confession of sins to God leads to forgiveness (1
John 1:9)

Confession along with repentance leads to healing
(2 Chron 7:14)

Forgiveness results in restoration and joy

Results in restoration and joy because of being
made perfect forever (Heb 10:14)

Results in restoration and joy because Jesus was
sacrificed once for all (Heb 9:28)

Results in restoration and joy because forgiveness
sanctifies (Acts 26:17-18)

Results in restoration and joy because of being
rescued from a dominion of darkness (Col 1:13-14)