

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Luke 15:10 | Psalm 32:5 | 1 John 1:9

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 8.13.23

SUMMARY

Over the centuries, Bible translators have given this parable the unofficial name of “The Prodigal Son.” However, the lesson beneath the surface of this passage is that this parable is about two brothers—the younger and the older. Moreover, the parable teaches us valuable lessons about the father’s response to his sons. When Jesus told this parable, his audience was mixed. “Tax collectors and sinners” were drawing near—those whom many believed were far from God—and the Pharisees and scribes—those whom many believed were closest to God. These two groups of people were represented as the two sons in this parable; the tax collectors and sinners were the younger brother, and the Pharisees and scribes were the older. Jesus begins by detailing the wayward behavior of the younger brother—behavior the listener might not have difficulty associating with tax collectors and sinners. After the younger brother asks for his share of the inheritance (something highly out of the ordinary), he squanders the money, then finds he’s reached bottom eating with the pigs. The younger brother then purposes to return to his father, pleading for mercy. The son began his journey home, and while he was still far off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and breaking all proper etiquette as a dignified member of the community, he *ran* to meet his son, shielding him from the shameful journey home. There were no stern words from the father, only mercy and celebration over his return home. This is the posture our Heavenly Father takes over anyone who repents—he always welcomes the one who comes home and *runs* to sinners, providing them cover for their sin and shame.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Luke 15:11-24.

The younger son asked his father for his share of the inheritance before his father passed away. What does this reveal about the heart of the younger son? To what degree can we relate to the younger son?

This parable teaches us that Jesus is a friend to sinners—he eagerly welcomes them home. Do you find yourself doubting the Father’s willingness to forgive? Why might people doubt the grace and mercy of the Father?

If there’s one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today’s themes in what you bring before God.