

Knowing the Father through Jesus

Luke 15:11-32

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Introduction:

Luke 15:1-2

"Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Jesus was going from town to town, house to house and preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. Wherever he went, many who were sick and with needs approached him and He welcomed them. Even the tax collectors & sinners drew near to Jesus wanting to hear more from Him & He didn't cast anyone of them away.

However, the Pharisees & teachers of the law on the other hand were not happy with what they were seeing. They believed God will never accept any tax collectors or sinners, and hence if Jesus claims to be the Son of God, then he should not associate with them. So, when they saw the tax collectors and sinners drawing near Jesus, they grumbled and were condemning Jesus for having fellowship with these group of people.

The son cut ties with the father (v11-v16)

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

Points from the passage

- While his father is still alive, the son decided to ask his father to give his share/portion of the property & set off for a distant land. The act of leaving his house with his portion of the share, while his father is still alive is treating his father as though he is dead.
- The act of being independent & rebellious has been men's problem from the beginning.

Genesis 3: 1-8

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

- Adam & Eve wanted to gain wisdom, for their eyes to be opened so they can be like God, knowing good and evil. They want the ability to determine good and evil apart from God. Only God can be the one to determine good from evil, we must rely on Him.
- The same can be seen in the younger son's life. He wanted control over his life without his father's interference. He drew the line with his father, took all he had & left.
- As time passed by, he had spent everything he had in wild living & began to be in need. Due to severe famine in the distant land he had to hire himself and work in the field to feed the pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.
- He is trapped in loneliness, completely broken, in despair & facing a hopeless situation. This is completely miserable.
- **John 10:10** it says, "¹⁰ *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*"
- We will assume we are in control of the small sins we have allowed in our lives but soon we will see the fast downhill fall of the consequences. Everything that we have built in our lives can be lost in a split second. Relationships & career can be damaged, families divided, one's reputation is destroyed, driven into loneliness, brokenness, hopelessness and meaningless live. We can end up in worse situations without anyone to bail us out.

The journey back home (v17 – v20)

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

Points from the passage

- The son began to make comparison of his current state (hired by someone in a distant land with no one giving him anything to eat) & his father’s hired servants (have food to spare for themselves).
- The son knew he had already forfeited his rights as the son. He knows he has cut every tie with his family. He had left his father, his brother, his land & his people and have come to a far distant land. He had messed big time here but he knows his father is merciful & loving. He can still make the U-turn home.
- The father would never approve or bless the decisions he had made but the son knows his father will always accept when he returns. He was prepared to return as a servant in his father’s house.
- **John 16:8**, “When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:”
- Just like how the younger brother came to his senses, many times the presence of the Holy Spirit will speak and bring conviction in us. We, like the younger son in the story, need to respond in obedience to the prompting and return to God.

Unconditional love of the Father (v20 – v24)

So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate.

²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Points from the passage

- While the son is still a long way off, his father saw him, filled with compassion and love, ran to his son, hugged and kissed him.
- His father was overjoyed simply for one reason, that his son who was lost is now found. He was dead and is alive again.
- Many can say to us there is no way we can turn back to God after messing up our lives. Some will say God has forgotten us and we will rot in our loneliness. There is good news. God eagerly waits for His children to turn and come back to him in repentance. He forgives and accepts us as we are.
- In **John 6:37** it says, “All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.”

Before he could ask his father to treat him as one of the servants, his father quickly asked the servants around to bring & give his son the best robe, ring & sandals

- Similarly when we turn to God in complete repentance, He:-

Puts the best robe on us

In Zechariah 3:1-4, "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan^[a] standing at his right side to accuse him. ² The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"

³ Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you."

God puts the best robe on us, which is His righteousness and declares us as right and justified before Him. There is now no more condemnation on us. The filthy garment of sin is removed from us.

Puts ring on our finger

Signifies the sonship and authority. A sign to indicate that He has restored our relationship and has welcomed us into His family.

Put sandals on our feet

A sign that we are not to live as servants but we are to walk as His children for slaves/servants do not wear sandals.

- God wants us to return to Him so badly. He provided the way for us. He sent Jesus, His only begotten Son to die for our sins on the cross.
- *Isaiah 53:5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."*
- In order for us to be forgiven & our relationship with God to be restored, Jesus took our sins on him & died a painful death on the cross. He rose again and made it possible for us to be with God forever.
- Do we know God this way? Do we know Him as a loving Father who welcomes His children back without any conditions? Or do we look at God as a distant Father who is waiting to punish us when we make a mistake?

Heart of the older son is exposed (v25 – v32)

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Points from the passage

- The older son was working in the field and when he came home heard music and dancing. Everyone in the house were celebrating
- He was very angry with his father for accepting his younger brother and refused to be happy for the fact that he has returned home safe. He didn't want to be part of the celebration but rather questions his father on the need for the celebration
- When we look at the way he speaks to his father, we can agree, he wasn't addressing his father with respect & his father had to plead with him to come in to join the celebration.

verse 29; *²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders.*

Unlike the younger son who addresses the Father with respect,

Father, give me my share of the estate Luke 15:12

Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. Luke 15:21

- The very strong words used by him ("I have been slaving for you" / "never disobeyed your orders") suggests that he never had a close intimate relationship with his father. It's more like a servant – master relationship.
- He never left his father's presence and yet had been living like a stranger in the house without any joy in him. Despite of him being with his father, he never really understood the heart of his father.
- The older son represents the Pharisees of Jesus' time.
- The Pharisees follow a set of rules (do this and don't do this), keeps the law and believes they can work their way to God. It's about doing more to attain merits and favour before God.
- *Ephesians 2: 8-9, ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.*
- We pray, read the Bible, we fast, and all these are presented to God so we can have a better treatment from Him in exchange.
- This is a result of life that never tasted the love and grace of the Father. When we don't fully comprehend & receive grace in our own lives, we can never accept people around us.

Walking in our new identity

So, how are we living our Christian life today:

Younger Son's Perspective:

Are we living like the younger son on the way back to his father? He condemns himself and says he had forfeited everything & don't deserve everything from his father. He knows his father is merciful but thinks His father will only accept him as one of the servants
= *It's all about the failures without having knowledge of the grace of the Father*

Elder Son's Perspective:

Are we living like the older brother who stays in the same house with his father but never had joy in his heart? Never really understood the love & grace the father has for him as legalism has messed his heart. Pride in him will make him think he had to earn everything & could never enjoy and celebrate being in the presence of his father. He will never have the heart for the lost and will not know how to receive the lost back in his life.

= *It is all about the work and not the heart of the Father*

Father's Perspective on us:

Finally, are we living in the Father's finished work. Yes, we were sinners (lost) but the penalty has been paid and we are forgiven (found). Christ died for us and now we are to put on our new identity & live as His children instead of servants. We can walk with Him daily knowing that we have been accepted. Only in Him there is true joy & celebration.

John 8:19, NIV: "Then they asked him, 'Where is your father?' 'You do not know me or my Father,' Jesus replied. 'If you knew me, you would know my Father also.'

- Jesus reached out to the sinners and served others in truth, grace, compassion and wisdom because He knew the Father's heart.
- The Pharisees on the other hand were proud, judgmental and served themselves because they did not know the Father.

We get to know the Father only through the Son, Jesus Christ.

Let's live as His children, knowing His heart, walking with Him & being found in Him. Amen!

PRAYER ITEMS

1. We need a heart that knows God in an intimate way through Jesus.
2. Rest on His finished work on the cross for us.
3. Give us the burden for the many unsaved people around us

Church

1. To be steadfast in our pursue of God's call over our lives
2. Intimate desires to be in His presence in prayer & worship
3. Ministries: Life Explorers, Redeeming Roses, Destiny Kids & Teens, Sunday School, Lifeline Youth, Worship Team, Pulpit Ministry & Church Leadership :
 - God will help us to carry out His works during MCO
 - God will help us to raise leaders
 - God will open doors for us to reach others
4. Families / Individuals in Life Church :- Strength and direction for those facing challenging situation

Covid 19

1. Healing & recovery for those who are infected
2. Frontlines
3. Vaccines – It will work for everyone without side effects
4. Recovery of economy & unemployment,

Healing / Recovery

1. Suba

Nation

1. Leadership of the nation
2. Education & Employment for everyone without biasness
3. God's Word to be proclaimed to all through the churches and ministries
4. Revival in the churches in Malaysia