

Grace and Conversion

Grace—part 3

July 14, 2019

The parable of the prodigal son has three characters: a father, an older son, and a younger son. He have much to learn from all three.

DAY 1: The father publicly humiliated and abandoned

Luke 15:11 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."

1. Imagine if your 20-something son came to you and demanded his inheritance ... right then! What would you think of your son? What do you imagine in this son?

Luke 15:13 "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."

2. What attitudes are likely coming through?

3. In Jewish culture, what the son did would cause public humiliation for the father and the family in the local town. The father would be completely shamed by the petulance, audacity, greed, and recklessness of the son.

4. Jewish culture had a "cutting off" ritual, whereby a son like this would be publicly "cut off" from his family, treated as if he were dead. No one would bring up his name, tell old stories, or even hint that he may still be alive. No one would keep track of the young man.

5. What do you imagine happening in the father's heart?

___ Heartbreak

___ Grief

___ Missing his son

___ Longing

___ Embarrassed when around his peers, shame, avoiding contact with them, etc.

___ Other: _____

6. The prodigal son is us. The father is God. When you think about your prodigal years, what do you imagine it was like for God the Father as He thought about you?

DAY 2: The son hits bottom.

Luke 15:13 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.

1. We are not told where the son went. It could have been anywhere. Perhaps you've been there.

2. What did he do when he got "there?"

3. We discover that the son took the road to nowhere, metaphorically speaking. The combination of a restless soul and a sinful nature do not make a good combination!

¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

4. Reality bites. Do you remember when the reality of life hit you? What struck you?

5. He's desperate just to eat!

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."

Luke 15:17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men 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 men.'"

6. The son finally hits bottom. What led him to hit bottom?

7. How have you hit bottom?

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Reconciling with the father

Luke 15:17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men 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 men.'

1. It is easy to assume that the son, has indeed, hit bottom. For sure, he's hit bottom regarding his living conditions, poverty, and virtual starvation.

2. Use Luke 15:17-19 to give your best answers for the following questions.

a. Has the son hit bottom in his heart?

b. Has the son hit bottom with his father?

c. Why is he primarily going home?

d. Is there something else you wish he would have rehearsed?

3. As the son is making his way home, he suddenly sees his father running toward him! The son appears to "freshen up" his rehearsed thoughts.

Luke 15:20 So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him ...

4. The son is ready to give his speech. Father and son meet. Before we find out what the father actually did, let's skip ahead just a bit to the son's short speech.

5. What do you think will happen next?

He'll finish his speech

The father will have a look of disappointment on his face

The son will feel the shame of failure

The father will explain how things will be different back home

The son will start back at the bottom of the "employee ladder" and work his way up, proving he's a different man, now.

6. Those items you could choose from were easy to write. Why? Because that's pretty much how we think when we've failed, and failed someone we love.

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: The celebration, a picture of God our Father

1. When we hit the pause button yesterday, we expected the son to finish his sorry soliloquy. But he is interrupted by the father, and not with words of scorn or shame!

*Luke 15:20 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**.*

2. How is the father's response different from what we would naturally expect in real life?

3. What strikes you about the father's response?

4. Why do you think the father responds this way?

5. This must have stunned the son, yet, he jumps into his rehearsed words.

Luke 15:21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

6. The father lovingly interrupts. The two make their way back home.

Luke 15:22 "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.

7. A celebration is about to begin. Why?

8. The picture of the father (little "f") is a depiction of our heavenly Father (capital "F"). Instead of a god who sneers, scorns, rolls his eyes, and grudgingly gives the boy a second chance, we see a VERY DIFFERENT kind of God. What strikes you, personally?

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: The older brother

Luke 15:25 "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!'

1. What is the essence of the older son's complaint?
2. To whom was older son mad?
3. Why do you think the older son was mad? Are there multiple reasons for his anger?
4. What was driving the son?

Luke 15:31 "'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.'"

5. The father's message to the older son is poignant. This parable was originally given directly to the Pharisees and religious teachers that assumed that if you checked all the boxes, crossed all the t's, and dotted all the I's, then you were great with God.
6. The attitudes of the older son reflect directly on these teachers and religious leaders.
7. What was Jesus trying to say to them, through the mouth of the father to his oldest son?
8. What strikes you about grace?