

Theme: The younger son in the parable mistakenly thought that his identity and joy would be found through self-discovery and self-indulgence apart from the father's presence and will.

## I. Intro - A River Runs Through It

- A. Great novel and beautiful movie
- B. Classic story of two brothers who are very different - one is a rule keeper, and the other wild and free
- C. This parable is that way too - these sons are very different from one another.
- D. But they each misunderstand their father and have deep problems
- E. Today we look at the younger son, next week the elder
- F. What is the younger son's story? Why does he do this?

## II. The Younger Son's Story

- A. He asks his father for his inheritance early  
Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.  
<sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. Luke 15:11–12
  - 1. The father has two sons - and they are very different
  - 2. The younger son would receive 1/3 of the inheritance by law
  - 3. He can't wait; he wants his future inheritance now
  - 4. This is rude and shameful - 'Dad can you do so I can get my stuff?'
  - 5. Amazingly, the father allows this and divides the property

- B. The son takes the money and runs!  
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. Luke 15:13
  - 1. He has the money but he wants to be away
  - 2. He does not leave anything behind to keep his link with home - he takes all he had
  - 3. He does not just move to another part of town - he goes to a distant country
  - 4. He does not just move far away from his father - he begins to live very differently
  - 5. He squanders everything in wild living
  - 6. At any point he could and should have kept some of the wealth and returned home, but sin always convinces us that the satisfaction and joy we crave will be found with just a little bit more, but it never delivers on its promises.
- C. The son ends up in utter destitution  
After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. Luke 15:14–16
  - 1. Eventually, all the money is gone, because these things can never fill the hole in his soul
  - 2. Then a famine strikes at the worst possible time! But this is often the case - our own foolish actions are compounded by events beyond our control.

3. All of this leaves him in dire straits, so he hires himself out as a menial servant
4. At any point he should have gone home, but he does not, because sin and folly always convince us that we can fix our problem on our own.
5. As a result, he ends up tending pigs - the worst job imaginable for a Jew.
6. But he sinks even lower - he wants to eat the pigs' food. There is no more pitiable sight!

### III. The Younger Son's Problem

- A. The younger son is restlessly searching to find his identity and joy in possessions rather than in the father
1. The younger son is more interested in the father's stuff than in the father himself.
  2. This is why he makes the rude request for the father's possessions - he loves the 'stuff' more than the father.
  3. But our identity and joy are only found in relationship with God - not in the things He gives us.  
 The bride eyes not her garment,  
 But her dear Bridegroom's face;  
 I will not gaze at glory  
 But on my King of grace.  
 Not at the crown He giveth  
 But on His pierced hand;  
 The Lamb is all the glory  
 Of Emmanuel's land.  
 (The Sands of Time Are Sinking)

- B. The younger son is restlessly searching to find his identity and joy in experiences rather than his father
1. The possessions now become merely the means to experience "wild living"
  2. However, like the possessions, these experiences do not deliver the promised joy.
  3. This is why he does not stop before he loses everything and return home. He is following a siren call that is leading him further and further down a path of ever deeper destruction and despair.
  4. The quest for joy through wild living and experiences always gives diminishing returns. The longer we go, the more is required to receive less and less. Eventually, what had produced fleeting joy becomes a consuming master and the person is reduced to a slave.
  5. This is the lesson of Ecclesiastes
- C. The younger son is restlessly searching to find his identity and joy apart from the presence of his father
1. Notice that in this pursuit, he moves to a distant country - he is no longer even near the father.
  2. His restlessness leads him to places farther and farther from his father. When our heart is gripped in seeking our identity and joy in something other than God, it will pull us farther and farther away from Him.
  3. But our identity and joy are only found in relationship with God - never apart from it.  
 "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." - Augustine

D. The younger son has misunderstood his father, finding His presence and will to be constraining rather than freeing

1. He thinks freedom means being able to make his own choices, to indulge his own desires and passions, to be free of his father's wishes and desires.
2. We do the same thing with God, thinking freedom is found apart from God and His law, but that actually only leads to slavery!

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." John 8:34

- a. Freedom from the will of God is actually slavery!
  - b. We were made in the image of God, and giving ourselves to anything contrary to God and His will is actually enslavement rather than freedom.
  - c. This is why we see so many addictions today - alcohol, drugs, sex, sports, video games, possessions, etc.
3. God's will and law actually produce freedom, joy, and blessing
- But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does. James 1:25
- a. God's Law does not produce bondage but rather freedom!
  - b. This is because we were created in God's image and for relationship with Him, and God's Law is merely a reflection of Who He is and thus how we were made.
  - c. This is why God says He gives His law to us for our own good (Deuteronomy 10:13)

d. Thus, when we rest in the Father's Presence, hearing and doing His will, it produces freedom, joy, and blessing in our lives.

#### IV. The Younger Son's Salvation

A. The younger son eventually awakes to his real problem

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! Luke 15:17

1. He finally awakes and realizes what a fool he has been!
2. He realizes even his father's hired hands have it better than he does! His "freedom" has enslaved him!

B. He repents and determines to throw himself on his father's mercy alone

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father. Luke 15:18–20

1. He decides to stop making excuses and to return to his father's presence, for joy will be found nowhere else.
2. He recognizes his own sin. He does not make excuses but owns up to his own destructive actions.
3. He recognizes the depth of his sin - against God and his father.
4. He forsakes his quest for false "freedom" and returns to his father, submitting to him.

5. This is a picture of true repentance - a change of heart and mind, an acknowledgment of the extent and depth of our sin, an end to our current behavior, and a definite return to the Father.

C. The Father graciously and mercifully receives the son

1. We looked at this in depth last week
2. Every wandering child can know that God's grace and mercy are far greater than our sin!
3. The father does not ask the son to grovel, nor does he keep him at arm's length. He receives the son immediately and completely - this is grace!

## V. Applying the Word

A. In what ways am I thinking and acting like the younger son?

1. Some of us in here are like the younger son - our life is a restless quest, and it often harms relationships
2. But even those of us who are more like the elder brother have times and areas where we are like the younger brother
3. What areas in my current thoughts, desires, and actions indicate that I think true freedom and joy will be found in something other than God?
  - a. Wealth and possessions
  - b. Food
  - c. Alcohol or drugs
  - d. Sex

- e. Relationship
- f. Entertainment
- g. Work
- h. Reputation

4. Am I willing to acknowledge this sin to God, and to stop my restless quest for joy in these things apart from God?
5. Sit down this week and make a definite plan regarding this area and how you plan to return home to the Father from that distant land

B. Coming to our Gracious Father in prayer

1. Remember - God is gracious and seeking repentant sons and daughters to return home
2. Come home to him today
  - a. From a major life dominating area
  - b. A small but growing desire that indicates we are moving away from our Father's Presence
3. A prayer of confession and repentance

### The Younger Son's Story

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

January 13, 2019

Prayer

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: confession and repentance; forgiveness; exile and return; humility and pride; God's grace

The Lord bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him.<sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable:...

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

<sup>13</sup> “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.<sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.<sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.<sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “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!<sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.<sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’<sup>20</sup> 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.

<sup>21</sup> “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’<sup>22</sup> “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.<sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate.<sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.<sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.<sup>27</sup> ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’<sup>28</sup> “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’<sup>31</sup> “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.<sup>32</sup> 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.’” Luke 15:1–3, 11–32