

07302023 I am convinced I could spend every Sunday morning for the rest of my life sharing with you in every conceivable way I could...that God loves you...and still never adequately explain the scope of his love. But that is not really the hard part...the hardest concept for many people to grasp is the trusting of that truth. ..That God really does love you....

Today Luke tells us of an incident where this is exemplified as Jesus responds to the criticism of the Pharisees and religious teachers muttering against Jesus as a representative of God for including the wrong kind of company He was keeping...let pick up the narrative

*NLT LK 15:1 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach.*

- **These were not just any sinners but notorious ones which means famous for all the wrong reasons ...**

*<sup>2</sup> This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!*

- **This wasn't the first time they had criticized Jesus and his disciples for associating with those the Pharisees considered to be off-limits, it was a regular and increasing in hostility criticism**
- **But you have to understand the Religious leaders thinking...The Pharisees saw themselves as righteous not as sinners. So they separated themselves...from sinners not even so much as to talk to them...**

**• And The Pharisees and teachers of the law wanted the sinner punished eternally...and believed God wanted them destroyed...and they absolutely deserved it**

**• So they could not fathom why Jesus would befriend them in any way...in their mind he should have separated himself from them completely...**

**So Jesus responds to their criticism... as Jesus says: “No! that is not how my Father feels about sinners And it is not how I feel about the lost! And he goes on to explain His Father’s heart in three stories...**

**...each one will illustrates an increasing seriousness of lost. Of the sheep 1% were lost, one lost person is worth searching for by God... the second 10% were lost...even ten percent lost are worth searching for by God...**

**Today lets examine the last story where wwhere 50% of a family went astray so for those with family members lost let this give you hope!**

- **Jesus gives us a picture of our father in Heaven.... And his lost son... someone in his family ..Jesus gives us a wonderful glimpse of God the Father’s tender, compassionate, even lavish love, his sons and daughters...never giving up on them and finally bringing them home.**
- **So we pick up this story as Jesus teaches the Religious leaders**

*LK 15:11 <sup>11</sup> To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. <sup>13</sup> “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. <sup>14</sup> About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. <sup>15</sup> He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything....*

- **This son was his own worst enemy...he squandered everything his father worked for and gave him**

- **He squandered his youth , His energy , his time, his inheritance**
- **but his father new there was one thing he knew his son could not squander...His Son ship!**
- **And his father's love for him never wavered....and more than even that...His Father knew how it would roll out...before it ever rolled out...NLT ISA 46:<sup>10</sup> Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish.**
- **Our Father knows everything about his child...before he was born! everything!!**

*NLT Ps 139:16 You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. <sup>17</sup> How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!*

*NLT Ps 139:2 You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.*

- **He was always watching over him...he knew where he was even when he was a long way off...**

*NLT PS 139:7 I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!*

- **His father knew he would return.....He knew his son's mind and heart, ...and he set up the circumstances...that would at some point make his child chose the right decision to come home**
- **It just had to get bad enough for him....**

<sup>17</sup> *"When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am*

dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, <sup>19</sup> and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant."

**The story of the prodigal son is the story of God and us...**

NLT Luke 15: <sup>20</sup> "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, *he ran to his son*, embraced him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'<sup>[b]</sup>'

**He went from I want my share of your estate now before you die to I am no longer worthy of being called your son.**

- ....The son was of the opinion I have sinned so greatly by my rebellion fallen short of what God would want... and am a disgrace to him and he has rejected me...and ...I have fallen so short of what a son should be and have brought disgrace to you, that you have rejected me...so I am disqualified from both.

**Apparently at one time he thought he was worthy of both!! But now worthy of neither...maybe he could just take orders and work for him...he went from dictating to his dad...to be willing to just work or do what he dad says ...as a job With no relationship...**

- let me be a servant.... The ordinary slave was in some sense a member of the family, but the hired servant could be dismissed at a day's notice. He was not one of the family at all."
- **Get the picture.....He is telling his dad this...as they are both a great way from home His dad had been keeping an eye on him...the whole time he was gone...and knew he was on his way**

home...unbeknownst to his son...he was waiting and looking for him...and so were his dad's servants... the fact that he ran (unusual for grown men in those cultures) and that he repeatedly kissed him...is the original meaning...he loved that boy! and His Father was full of compassion for his son...for the mess he made with his life! He felt the pain in his son!!

- And The father was not at all concerned with the son's opinion of himself, but only his opinion. His position never changed because of his actions...he was and is his son.
- That is wonderful...and greatly encouraging

NLT LK 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.<sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

- He commanded that he be honored as His son, and not like a servant....
- None of the four things brought to the repentant son were necessities; they were all meant to honor the son and make him know he was loved. And known that he was family ... The father did much more than merely meet the son's needs.
- His son was Home!

<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.

- They had a wonderful party with special clothing, jewelry, and food. It wasn't just finding a lost son; it was as if he were back from the dead.

*NLT LK 15:25 " "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, <sup>26</sup> and he asked one of the servants what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'<sup>28</sup> "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, <sup>29</sup> but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. <sup>30</sup> Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'*

- **But what is sad is the fact the other son...who never strayed... He was dutiful...performing for acceptance...**
- **He thought living with dad...was a form of performance slavery and obedience with was grueling and hard with little hope of guaranteed reward... not even a young goat meal with friends**
- **Sometimes the good child ...has a hard time believing that he is truly loved by His father...somewhere along the line he embraced a lie that his father's love was based on his performance...and is maintained by his continued performance for acceptance....**
- **he thinks he earned it past tense...and has to continue to earn it present tense...and must earn it future tense...and maybe get a reward...the dutiful but cynical son...the joyless Christian**
- **His heart was far from his father...never rested or truly knew his father's love for him...nor what was available to him...**
- **Some of us are like that....**

*NLT LK 15: 31 “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours.*

**But his Father said....it is all yours...you can do and have whatever you want...it has always been yours...**

**His lost coming home would be the eye opener for this other lost son to know he was loved...because he was his son!**

**And so if he loved the other lost son...who squandered so much ...he must love this son also, and because he did not squander his inheritance...it was still his!!!**

- **The son who did not stray had his father’s unconditional love...and will be greatly rewarded for his labor for the family. He is a double winner...though he did not know that**
- **The others son’s life that day changed...his dad was for him and believed in him enough to give him everything he now owns.**

*<sup>32</sup> We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”*

**The real deal is just that to believe we who belong to Our Father’s family are loved period... ...when that is settled we begin to understand obedience is for our benefit!! And it will be rewarded!!**

**end**