

## The Father Who Ran

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-11

The theme of this chapter is that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents (Luke 15:10). The Pharisees and scribes were critical of Jesus for associating with people who were obvious sinners – even eating with them! Jesus described the joy a man would have if he found his lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7 cp. Matthew 18:11-14; Luke 19:1-10). Jesus also described the joy a woman would have if she lost one of her coins of silver (possibly belonging to her dowry) and, after diligent search, found it. Then Jesus told the story that is possibly the most well-known and loved of all of Jesus' parables.

Read Luke 15:11-32

This story has many lessons. Most people call it ***"The parable of the prodigal son."*** Others might notice Jesus' words, ***"A man had two sons."*** In the Middle East, this story has been referred to as ***"The parable of the father who ran."*** In some cultures, fathers are not expected to run or to be in a hurry. That is for younger men. The elder men should be calm, composed, and stately. So, it is unusual that a father would run to meet his son.

To those who wander spiritually, we see a warning of how that can happen. **The younger son** said, ***"give me"*** (Luke 15:12). He was only interested in what he could get from his father's hand. After suffering loss, he became interested in his father's heart and in the blessings of God (Luke 15:17-18; Proverbs 3:1-18; 10:22; 23:26; Psalm 105:4; 100:2; I Thessalonians 1:9; I Timothy 6:1-19). Later, when the younger son repented, he said, ***"make me a servant"*** (Luke 15:19). The example of **the father** helps us to see God as a heavenly father. To those who find themselves far from God, we see that the Heavenly Father is **full of mercy and forgiveness. It's safe to come home** (Psalm 103:8-14; Isaiah 55:6-7). **The eldest son** gives us a warning about being religious and self-righteous. This is a picture of those who are very loyal to their religious beliefs and proud, but have no heart for people caught in the trap of sin (Luke 5:27-32; 16:15; 18:9-14; Isaiah 65:5; Jude 1:17-19). The father in this story reasoned with his **hard-hearted, angry** son. He wanted this son to show love and compassion (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:10-13). To those who shepherd God's flock and who deal with the diversities of people and their problems, we see the example of **the father patiently caring for the needs of both sons** (Matthew 9:36-38; Philippians 2:1-5; I Corinthians 10:23-24; I Thessalonians 2:7-12; II Timothy 2:24-26 cp. Jeremiah 33:12; Hebrews 10:23-25 – we all should be shepherding one another, this is not just for pastors).

To fathers who want to love and guide their children, we have the following lesson:

### **This father was longsuffering towards a selfish son. (Luke 15:11-12)**

He did not indulge his son, but he did give his son freedom to make his own choices. While at home, the son worked and participated in the family business. When this son showed no heart for it, the father did not try to coerce him. This father released him to follow his heart and learn life's lessons his own way. To the father, it felt like his son died (Luke 15:24). He had to trust God with his son's fate. See Job's burden for his children: how he interceded for them (Job 1:4-5). Paul showed that he trusted God with the results of his ministry to others (Romans 15:13-18; Philippians 1:6; I Thessalonians 5:23-24; II Thessalonians 3:3-5; Galatians 5:10). At the same time, see the burden that Paul had in his heart for those to whom he ministered (Galatians 1:6; 3:1; 4:11,19).

### **This father had love and compassion to a sorrowing son. (Luke 15:20-24)**

His son didn't have to say a word. He just had to come back. The father was glad to receive him. See how God feels when he disciplines His own (Jeremiah 31:18-20). The waste of money and time was nothing compared to the relationship of the son with God and with his family. The soul is worth more than all earthly gain (Matthew 16:26).

### **This father was looking to guide a stern son. (Luke 15:25-32)**

He did not forget his other son. He noticed a problem and reasoned with him (Luke 15:28). The father listened to his son (Luke 15:29-30). He reminded his son that he was important and appreciated (Luke 15:31). He also reminded him of the importance of having a brother (Luke 15:30 – *"thy son"* cp. Luke 15:32 – *"thy brother"*). The father taught his son to care about souls more than material things; to care about others more than himself (**Luke 15:1-7**; II Corinthians 8:9; 12:14-15; Philippians 2:1-4,17; II Timothy 2:10; I Thessalonians 2:19-20).

### **Conclusion**

Let us look to God as a heavenly father who yearns for us and seeks us for joyful fellowship and blessings.

- See how He sought for Adam and Eve when they fell into sin (Genesis 3:8-9 cp. John 4:23-24).
- See God's heart as He looks on those who have sinned and desires them to be restored (Ezekiel 18:23; Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 33:18; 34:17-18; 51:16-17; 103:8-14; Proverbs 3:11-12,34; James 4:6-10; I Peter 5:5-6; Jeremiah 31:18-20).

Consider Jesus, the Son of God, sent to gather us and bring us to God (Luke 19:10; Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16; I Peter 3:18 cp. John 14:1-6).