

The Prodigal Son

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[0:00] Luke chapter 15, we'll read the first 24 verses. Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear him.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, This man welcomes sinners and eats with them. Then Jesus told them this parable. Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them.

Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home.

Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, Rejoice with me! I have found my lost sheep. I tell you that in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, Rejoice with me! I have found my lost coin.

[1:09] In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. Jesus continued, There was a man who had two sons.

The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country, and there squandered his wealth and wild living.

After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in the whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

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. I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

[2:20] Make me like one of your hired men. 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. The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. 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. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. We all know the grief of losing something and then the exhilarating joy of finding it again.

And it's this common experience of life that the Lord Jesus taps into to bring home his point in the parable of the prodigal son.

[3:25] Actually, in Luke chapter 15, we have three parables told together and they belong together because they all speak about something that was lost.

And the preciousness of the thing lost increases with each parable. In the first parable, it's one sheep out of a hundred that is lost.

In the second, it's one silver coin out of ten that is lost. And in the third, it's one son out of two that is lost.

And in each parable, that which was lost is sought and found. And when it is found, it's the occasion of immense joy. And Jesus drives home his punchline in saying, in the same way, there is great rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents.

Now, do we think of heaven that way? When you think of heaven, do you think of God himself and the holy elect angels and the spirits of just men made perfect breaking out in joyful celebration each time one sinner turns from his own way of sin and trusts in the Savior and is saved?

[4:54] Do we think of heaven that way? If not, Jesus is telling us, think again. This is the way it is. Change your mind about God, about heaven.

But more than that, Jesus is asking us, do you share in this joy of mine? Do you share in this joy of mine?

Now, why is Jesus telling us these parables? Well, Luke tells us in verses 1 and 2 why. Because the Pharisees and teachers of the law were boycotting the celebration.

They were not rejoicing to see Jesus calling sinners to repent and to receive eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. Instead, they were muttering, complaining, grumbling.

This man, it's what they say of Jesus, this man welcomes sinners and even eats with them. Now, of course, they were referring to that class of sinners who were openly sinful.

[6:00] They didn't make any pretense of being religious. They were living for themselves in pleasure. And in this class of sinners, we find the tax collector.

In other passages, we find the prostitute. We find the openly immoral, the homosexual, the thieves, the murderers, the drunkards. You know the lot.

The outcasts. And for the most part, they were undesirable outcasts as viewed by the religious leaders. And the people as a whole seemed to follow the cue from their religious leaders in looking down on these outcast sinners.

And they looked down their noses at them with hard and cold hearts. They didn't seek them to call them to repent. After all, they didn't deserve to belong to the kingdom of God.

Not the way they live. And it was these very outcasts that found in Jesus of Nazareth someone who was absolutely different from that.

[7:07] They found in Jesus one who did not despise and reject them but who took a real interest in them. He ate with them. He came to their house and talked with them with respect.

He lovingly called them to repent, to turn from their sin and to receive eternal life as a free gift of God's grace. He sought them out.

He welcomed them to enter the kingdom of God. And so here they are gathered around Jesus eager to listen to what He says as He teaches.

They're there. And so were the scribes and the Pharisees and their muttering about this whole thing. So Jesus has these two groups in His audience.

He often has them. Isn't it interesting? We find these two groups often before. It was a Pharisee and a tax collector that went into the temple to pray. Remember the parable about the two sons that were sent into the vineyard?

[8:10] Well, it represented the Pharisees and these outcast sinners. And so here we find these two groups in the audience. The non-religious outcast sinners and the very religious self-righteous leaders.

And Jesus has something to say to each group. Indeed, He has something to say to us. Well, His great concern for the outcast sinners on the one hand is to see them repent of their sinful ways and be saved.

But the religious self-righteous were putting stumbling blocks in their way. And Jesus is out to remove these stumbling blocks. Two wrong ideas.

Number one, that they must first deserve forgiveness before seeking it. And secondly, that God has no desire for the likes of them to enter His kingdom.

Both are lies. And the scribes and Pharisees were teaching those lies and they were exemplifying those lies by their very demeanor and their lives. And Jesus would rescue them from thinking that God in heaven is like them.

[9:26] That's His concern for the down-and-out sinner. His great concern for these self-righteous religious people is to see them abandon their wrong ideas and to show them how out of harmony their hearts are with God's heart and with His gospel of grace that they too might repent and be saved and so rejoice together with other sinners in God's gracious and free salvation.

We'll look more at this class of sinners the self-righteous next week when we look at the older brother. But let's come then to the prodigal son the parable of the prodigal.

Once upon a time there is this wealthy estate owner who has two sons. And the younger son said to him Father give me my share of the estate. He's unmarried.

He's single. Probably a teenager. And he's not happy with life in his father's house. It oozes through everything that he says. He's clearly not loving his father.

He just wants his father's things. Now when his father died his whole estate would be divided between the younger son and the older one.

[10:44] It was coming to him. But this younger son is not content to wait for his father to die. As if he wants him dead early. That he might have his estate from him.

Now to give him his share of the estate early would be no small problem. It would no doubt involve the selling of livestock and perhaps even land.

And to have to just sell on the spot and to receive the going price whether it was low or high and yet this son cared nothing about that. Just give me my share now dad.

And so the father divided up what had taken a lifetime of work to accumulate and then the younger son gathered up his portion and was gone.

You see he wanted independence from his father. He didn't just want his things he wanted to be gone. Good riddance to dad. Dad's the problem. I don't like his rules.

[11:45] I don't like him. I don't like always having to answer to him. I don't like being told what to do. So away from him he goes and the farther away the better.

He cuts dad completely out of his life and goes into a far a distant country. And there he could do what he wanted, when he wanted, with whomever he wanted.

Free from his father's restraint. And as long as the money lasted it was let the good times roll and he was having fun wasting his wealth in wild living.

And we want to pause at this point in Jesus' story and draw out the spiritual applications. We'll do this along the way as we go through the story. First of all the father.

The father in this story represents Jesus Christ who is God remember. So it's God but it's Christ the son of God. You see he is represented in all three of these parables.

[12:55] He's the shepherd. He's the woman and he is the father in each parable who seeks and finds that which is lost. So that's the father the Lord Jesus.

Well who does this younger wayward son represent? Well it clearly represents this class of sinners over here. These outcast sinners who don't give a rip at all about God and his laws and his commands.

They're just out sinning it up. It's the tax collectors and prostitutes. They're this younger brother. And everyone can see it that it applies to them.

But what is perhaps not so apparent is that we all Pharisees and teachers of the law included are a lot like the younger brother.

For Isaiah says that we all have gone astray. We all like sheep have gone astray. We have turned each one of us to our own way.

[13:58] You see we all live on God's estate. We eat his food. We enjoy his sunshine.

We walk on his earth. We draw his breath. And we enjoy his things. Life and health and families and freedoms and money.

Every good thing we have we live on his estate and we enjoy his things but him we do not enjoy.

We did not enjoy him. We did not like him. We did not like his ways his laws.

And so we turned our back on him. And we went our own way. Just as this younger brother did. We took what he had given us to use to glorify him and we wasted it on ourselves and on sin.

And so the good life for us did not include knowing God and serving him. that wasn't in our plan to be under his lordship not a chance.

[15:03] So we declared independence from him and we'd just as soon have him dead as alive. Indeed that's what we did when God came to earth and men could get their hands on it.

We crucified him. We killed him. And with our backs toward God we pursued the good life out there away from God separated from God living for pleasure.

And just as the prodigal son had no regard for his father's will so we had no regard for God's will.

And whenever there was conflict between God's will and my will I went my way and you went your way.

But it wasn't God's way. It was into the far country of sin. You see we all resemble this prodigal son more than we may like to admit.

We all can sing with the hymn writer I was a wayward child. I did not love my home. I did not love my father's voice.

[16:05] I loved afar to Rome. And Rome we did from God. But this younger son though all of us resemble him remember the two groups of people before Jesus it is especially this outcast group of sinners that are seen clearly in this younger son who make no claim of loving and serving God and threw off all religion and ran headlong into sin's path.

So Jesus continues the story. When his money ran out the good times also rolled to a sudden stop and as providence would have it his money runs out just at the time when a great famine came upon that whole country and the whole economy of the country came to a screeching standstill. Timing couldn't be worse for this lad and for the first time in his life we're told he began to be in need. In need. He never felt need before.

For his father's provision was always there. But now out on his own away from his father there's no safety net to catch him so he's feeling need for the very first time.

But don't get the wrong idea he's not hit bottom yet. He can fix this he'll just get a job. Well it's not an easy thing to do when the economy has hit the skids and famine fills the land a severe one at that so the best he can find is to hire himself out to herd pigs to scavenge for food.

[17:45] And as soon as Jesus said that the whole audience would have wrinkled up their noses what a disgusting disgraceful thing. Boy he's hit bottom. You can't get lower for to the Jews of course pork and the pig was an unclean animal and this was the most humiliating repugnant slave labor that could be envisioned for a Jew and that religious crowd over here is thinking serves him right.

Serves him right. Well the job didn't work out did it because he was worse off than the swine that didn't answer his need he longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating but no one gave him anything not even the pigs as they scavenged.

Where are all the friends now kids? Well they're gone with his money. there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother but he turned his back and ran from him and so he's alone.

This is where his search for freedom and the good life has brought him. Impoverished starved and slayed. What a graphic picture of life without God in the far country of sin.

You know life was never meant to work without Jesus Christ at the center. life was never meant to work for any boy, girl, man or woman, whatever their age, whatever their color, whatever their occupation, life isn't meant to work without Jesus on the throne of that heart.

[19:27] And it's not long before the Lord's runaways bump into this law that governs their world that the way of the transgressor is hard. And so troubles come, problems, afflictions, it may be financial, it may be physical, it may be relational.

In one way or another, we find ourselves to be in need in this life and in need without a Savior. But such is our lostness that even in our need we do not initially seek the Lord Jesus Christ and repent of our sins.

Self-reliant pride, love of sin do not allow us to run to Jesus Christ. We're slaves to our sin, sin. But eventually in God's own elect people we are finally brought to the turning point of conversion.

Do you see where the turning point is in the parable? Verse 17, when he came to his senses. Sadly, a lot of folks never come to their senses.

Yeah, they hit what we think ought to be the bottom. They ought to wake up now, but they never do. They're dead in sin. But this man graciously came to his senses.

[20:41] What a way to put it. Man without God has lost his senses. He's out of it. He's in sin's stupor. He's in the sleep of death.

He's out of his mind. There is an insanity and irrationality about sin and it takes sovereign grace to wake us up to it. And this man wakes up and for the first time he sees the insanity of his sin.

Oh, it's so foolish. How many of my father's hired men have food to spare and here I am starving to death. What folly. But also what wickedness.

What wickedness to have rejected my father. Yes, his need reminded him of the father and of his father's house. of his provision, of his plenty.

But this son is not just wanting to improve his condition. He's also humbled over his sin. Notice he says, I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

[21:56] Now kids, you must see that. These are the words of Jesus put into this man's mouth in the parable. I have sinned against heaven and against you, father.

Children, do you know that every sin against mom and dad is a sin against God in heaven? That's what this man, this boy comes to see. I've sinned against heaven when I sinned against you. And he sees it now for the first time, the wickedness of it. What I did to my father, how could have I done so? He's ready to go home and to confess his sin to God.

Now that's the reality that we wake up to when we come to our senses, when God graciously wakes us up. Those who are dead in sin, he quickens to new life and we see my sin, that's my greatest problem, my sin against a holy God.

Notice how humbled he is for his sin against his father. Look what he intends to tell his father. He intends to say to him, I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

[23:10] Make me like one of your hired men. He freely owns his sin. He makes no excuses for himself. He knows, I forfeit all rights to be called his son.

I blew it. And that's what sin does to us. It forfeits all rights to belong to the family of God.

And when God opens our eyes, we see that for the first time. Now, this is so crucial. And nothing but the saving grace of a seeking God can bring us to it.

To where we will have nothing good to say for ourselves. Absolutely nothing good to say for me.

And to own that my sin is so great that it has forfeited my place in God's family forever.

Forever and ever. I deserve to go to hell. I'm unworthy of heaven. I'm unworthy to belong to God's family. I'm no longer worthy.

[24:21] You know, the Pharisees and teachers of the law over here, they would have choked on those words if they ever tried to pray. They'd rather die than pray those words because they thought they were worthy of being called the children of God.

They kept the law. They went to church. They did the sacrifices. They did the religious thing. they had not sinned as others had sinned.

But Jesus says that none are in a condition to receive free forgiveness from God who do not confess their sin and unworthiness of him.

No man can ever receive free forgiveness from God who will not stand with this prodigal son and say I am unworthy. I have sinned against you and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

There's no entrance into heaven without that confession of sin. I wonder if you've been brought that low before God.

[25:34] I wonder if you've ever realized how wicked your sin is that you deserve hell forever never to belong to the family of God. have you ever said that to God in confession?

You see none will look away to Christ for salvation as long as they think that they're good enough to contribute their own good works and buy it. But when sovereign grace awakens us then we see our sins.

We see our unworthiness. You know what else we see? We see the Lord Jesus and how he perfectly meets all of our needs as a sinner. We see his great provision. We see Jesus as we never saw him before.

Because when he came to his senses he thought about his father. We never read anything of his father until he came to his senses. Then he thinks of his father and the provision of plenty with him. How many of my father's hired men have food to spare and here I am starving to get to death. This is a picture of the awakened sinner seeing his need, starving, and yet the full provision in Jesus Christ.

[26:50] Well what is it that the sinner needs? He needs righteousness. I need righteousness. But I don't have any. Because I'm a lawbreaker. And nothing I do can make up for one of my sins.

How in the world will I get righteousness? I'm starving for it. I must have it to get into heaven. Oh, Jesus has plenty and to spare. To spare.

For me. He perfectly obeyed the father and thereby worked out a perfect righteousness for himself and for every believing sinner. He has righteousness.

What else do I need? And I'm starving without. Well I need forgiveness for my sins. For my guilt. I deserve the punishment of hell.

That's what I'm headed toward. Oh, but Jesus Christ died as a substitute in place of all who trusted him. For Christ died for sin once for all.

[27:52] The righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God. It's in him that we have redemption. The forgiveness of sins. And so as the sinner wakes up, is awakened by sovereign grace, what does he see?

He sees his sin, his need, but he sees that Jesus Christ has righteousness and forgiveness to give. Why am I here starving when Jesus has this that I need?

Now I may have heard of these things before, but now I see them for the first time. And I see them in relation to me. My sin, my unworthiness, my righteousness, my forgiveness, my Savior.

So having seen his sin and his father's provision, this younger son resolve is now put into action. It says in verse 20, so, so he got up and went to his father.

Do you know that it's not enough to resolve to go to Jesus Christ? It's not enough to say, you know, I'm going to go to Jesus Christ one day and get righteousness and forgiveness. forgiveness. The Bible doesn't promise eternal life to those who resolve to go to Christ.

[29:18] It promises eternal life to those who actually get up and go to him. Some of you are resolving and resolving and resolving, someday I'll go to Christ for righteousness and forgiveness.

forgiveness. But there is no righteousness and there is no forgiveness for resolvers who do not, as this young boy did, get up and go.

Have you got up and gone, sinner? Have you come to Christ? For whoever comes to me, I will in no wise cast out, Jesus says. It's not enough just to turn from our sin.

Repentance is not just turning from our sins, it's turning from our sins to God. It's coming home to the Father. Notice he's now willing to obey his Father, whereas once he wanted out from under his Father's rule, now he's willing to come and obey him, even as a hired hand would do.

And that too is a part of true repentance. When a man has his eyes open to his sin and to the Savior, he looks at his own way of living and he says no, and he turns to the Savior and says, yes, I will live for you.

[30:31] A new obedience. Full purpose, an endeavor after, new obedience, part of repentance. Well, we come to the homecoming.

He got up and went to his Father, and now the whole scene takes us to the homecoming. And there's no way that Jesus' audience could have ever been prepared for the thing that happened next in Jesus' story.

They're sitting there thinking, well, it serves him right. And they're tisking and muttering to each other. Isn't it just like what happens when they've gone and spent and wasted everything, then they come groveling back.

And what does Jesus say? Jesus says, well, but also, it's not just the crowd that's taken by surprise. It's the prodigal son himself who is taken by surprise.

What is his thought as he turns back to go home? Oh, if I could just go home and be one of my father's hired men, that would be great. That's what he's looking for.

[31:39] Oh, but the surprise of surprises in this story is the homecoming that he received from his father because he receives a hero's welcome. You've seen ticker tape parades when the men came back from World War II?

That's the kind of reception he receives from his father. A hero's reward, a reception. He's received as an honored son, not as a hired hand, but with nothing less than the full status of sonship.

And so, verse 20, while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. It implies that the father had been watching for his son.

And probably from the first day that his son left, his eyes had been on the road. Perhaps today. Perhaps today. Because while he was afar off, his father saw him.

He saw him. And there was nothing in the dishonor, in the rejection, in the hatred of his son that could stop up the wells of compassion in his heart for his son.

[33:00] And that compassion now expressed itself. Notice how it expressed itself. He ran to his son. That's something that old men never did.

There aren't very many of them that do it anymore. But it's something that never happened in that culture. A dignified older man would not be found running. king, especially a dignified land owner as he was.

But you remember, kings didn't usually put off their robes and dance before the Ark of the Covenant either. But David, under the joy and celebration of the Ark of the Covenant being brought back to Jerusalem, does what convention did not think of and throws off his robes and dances with joy

before the Ark.

And so this father throws convention and etiquette to the wind and runs after his son. The very one who couldn't wait until his dad died to get his estate cannot now wait for his son to get home.

And so he races to meet him. What compassion. And once he reaches him, he immediately throws his arms around him and kisses him.

[34 : 13] kisses him. That means that even before the son could out with his confession, he was assured of his father's love.

And said a word yet, he smothered in the embrace and kisses and compassion of his father. nothing makes us melt more.

Nothing makes our sin more ugly. Nothing makes us feel our unworthiness more than the undeserved love of the one we've sinned most against.

And now, now this son sobs out his heartfelt confession. Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. But he's cut short, unable to get out the part about make me like one of your hired sons because the father just interrupts his confession by saying quick to his servant, bring the best robe and put it on him.

[35 : 32] Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Now the son is right, of course. He is not worthy to be called his son. No doubt about that.

In either group of the audience, everyone would agree, he does not belong there, he is not worthy, but the father will not have it any other way.

He restores him not as a hired hand but as a son. And so the robe instead of his rags is far beyond the bare necessities. It's a garment of honor.

And the ring, probably bearing the family seal, designates his authority as a son. And the sandals, only slaves went barefoot.

That won't do. This is my son, not my slave, not my hired hand. Put sandals on his feet. Everything about these lavish gifts declares, I accept you fully as my son.

[36 : 37] And that surprised him and it surprised both of these groups listening to Jesus. But the father's not done.

His joy just continues to bubble over. Bring the fattened calf. Yeah, the one that we save for the special occasion. Kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

And here's the cause for this joyful celebration. For this son of mine. Do you see he's not ashamed to identify him as his son in public? This son of mine was dead and he's alive again.

He was dead to us. He was gone. He was as good as dead but now he's back home alive and for us to enjoy. He was lost and he's found and they began to celebrate with feasting glad music and dancing.

Now let's not miss Jesus' point in the story. the main point of the faribble is this. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

[37 : 43] There is exuberant joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. There is celebratory joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.

There's joy like you don't know what joy is in heaven over one sinner who turns from his sinful way and comes to Jesus in repentance and faith.

Whoever you are, whatever you've done, however far in sin you've roamed, however long you've stayed away from God, if you this moment will turn and come to Jesus Christ, this is the reception you will find.

Is it any wonder this is called the good news, the gospel? This is good news. We have a gospel for anyone. Out and out sinner haven't thought about God in years.

You'll come today. Heaven, God, the angels, the spirits of just man, they'll rejoice. Jesus is bearing his heart and the joy that he has over a sinner's salvation.

[39 : 00] You will find exactly what the returning prodigal found. There's no cool standoffishness here, is there? There's none of that awkward silent treatment.

Fidgeting, wonder what dad's going to say. There's no reluctance on the father's part. There's no brow beating. How could you ever do this to me?

There's no groveling demanded, but a confession that's interrupted. There's only running feet, embracing arms, kissing lips, lavish gifts, overflowing compassion, celebratory joy.

That's the reception the sinner receives from Jesus Christ. Who? Yes, the one who is no longer worthy to be called his son.

The wasteful, rebellious son. That's what he receives. The one who impoverished himself. The one who insulted his father, who disgraced his family, who sinned against heaven.

[40 : 10] That's the one who receives this reception. Oh, do we get that? That's what you'll receive. Forgiveness.

Forgiveness. All of your sin, all of your past, forgiven, remembered no more. In an instant, that you return to Jesus.

Clothed with the righteousness of Christ that we've been reading of this morning, and therefore treated as God's perfect son. Not treated as the prodigal son, but treated as his best son.

Because you're dressed in his righteousness now. Adopted into his family with God loving you as your heavenly father, who never stops doing you good and rejoices over you with singing.

That's what you'll meet with. All this for one who is no longer worthy to be called his son. Have you gone to Jesus?

[41 : 14] Have you got up and gone to him? If not, this is what you'll find. This is it. And that's the reception you'll find whether you're coming for the first time or the hundredth time.

Because believers, the truth of the matter is that we sometimes wander off into the far country of sin. And there are sometimes things in our lives that we know are not pleasing to the Lord.

God's worth. And he comes and he shows it to us. And our hearts are cold to him and they're warm to the world and warm to the world's pleasures.

And we have little time and little love for God. But all kinds of time and all kinds of love for the world. We're too busy enjoying his things to enjoy him.

Well, come home. Get up and go to him today. And if you do, what will you find? You'll find exactly what this prodigal son found. You'll find this welcome.

[42 : 20] This joyful welcome. No standoffishness. No aloofness. But his warm embrace, his kiss of forgiveness, his joyful celebration, his delight to renew fellowship.

It's delighting you. This crowd would not seek sinners. Jesus is not like that.

God is not like that. He sent his son on a mission to seek and to save that which is lost. And you see, the fact of the matter is that Jesus was seeking these sinners that came to him.

You see it in the other two parables very clearly, don't you? The shepherd sought the sheep. And the father sought his child too. And the woman sought for that lost coin.

And we need to see that yes, the father sought his wayward son as well. Believe it, dear ones. It was he who pursued us.

[43 : 37] His love followed us into the far country of sin. Right into the haunts of our wild living. His love pursued us there. His love awakened us and showed us our sin and showed us the full provision in Christ.

He was seeking us, seeking us. He's the one who brought to mind the precious plenty back in the father's house.

It was he who first planted a desire in our hearts to return to the father. It was he who quickened us to actually get up and go. And in all these ways and more, he was seeking us.

And so we sing, I sought the Lord. I remember, you remember the day you sought the Lord? I sought the Lord. But afterwards, I knew, he moved my soul to seek him, seeking me.

It was not I that found those Saviors true. No, I was found of thee. And so it is here. Jesus is seeking.

[44 : 43] Could it be that some of you this morning are here because Christ is seeking you? You're here. And you've been thinking about your sin and you're seeing more and more, that's my problem.

It's not my wife, it's not my husband, it's not my kids, it's not my parents, it's me. My sin against God. And you've had a desire to be right with God. And you're here this morning to hear of this welcome that he has for you if you come to him.

Oh, dear sinner, go to him. Then go to him. What holds you back? This is what you'll find, a willing and an able Savior. Bible says, in Exodus 34, he is plenteous in mercy.

Micah says, he delights in mercy. Not only has a lot of it, but he delights to give it. There's no reluctance in it. That means that if you come to Jesus Christ to save you from your sins, he'll delight to put all your sins under the blood of Jesus, to cast them behind his back and to remember them no more.

He'll not only do it, he'll be happy to do it, glad to do it. It's one of his exquisite pleasures that he takes delight in. In this adult Sunday school class we've started a study on the pleasures of God and here's one of his exquisite pleasures, the repentance of one sinner, saving one sinner.

[46:22] Oh, he's more than delighted to show mercy. So come home today. Oh, but come directly home, just as you are. This fellow, this young man, he didn't say, oh, I'll go to my father, but I'm going to turn aside here to the city of morality and get all cleaned up first and then I'll make myself presentable and go to my father.

You know what's so beautiful about the story? Is that he goes from the pigs straight into the arms of his father with a scent of pigs still on him?

The evidence of having lived a hard life in the far country. And what does he receive? Celebration, joy, welcome, son of mine.

He's dirty, so he comes to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. And he says, foul I to the fountain fly, wash me savior or I die. He's naked, without any covering of righteousness before God. And so he comes and says, naked, come to thee for dress. He's helpless, so he looks to him for grace.

[47:41] He's sick, so he goes to him for healing. Whoever heard of waiting till you get better before you go to the doctor? Whoever heard of waiting till you get clean before you take a bath or a shower?

If you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all. You'll just keep resolving to come. Not the righteous, not the righteous, sinners. Jesus came to call.

Right now, whoever you are and whatever your sin, you come to Jesus right there. You give yourself to Jesus. Save me from my sin. And he receives you with joy. Take these very words with you.

Take the prodigal's words. You ever seen yourself as the prodigal? Take them there this morning. Father, I've sinned against you. I am no longer worthy to be your son. Save me for Jesus' sake. And you'll receive the prodigal's welcome. He'll rejoice to receive you. Jesus is telling us that heaven is a happy place. With jubilant celebration over each and every sinner who repents, is that how you think of God?

[48:49] God, is that your operating view of God? If not, repent. Soak on this parable. Soak yourself in this parable every day this week. Think, hear again the Father saying, let us celebrate.

Let us celebrate. Every day, see him running, hugging, kissing, rejoicing over the unworthy penitent until this heaven-drawn picture etches itself on your mind, settles into every crack of your heart, and you share in that same joy of heaven.

How will we know when this story of Jesus and its message has sunk in to us? Well, we will quickly run to Christ in repentance, Christian, lost person, whoever you are, whether we're lost or sick. When we sin, we will quickly run to him because we know what reception we'll receive with him. Right away, get to Christ. And secondly, we'll lovingly call the worst of sinners to come to Jesus Christ.

The outcasts, those that are Satan's outcasts, society's outcasts, will welcome them to Christ and will rejoice when they come. So maybe the very celebration in heaven, spill over into our hearts and expand them with Christ's love as we glory in his grace.

[50:24] There's one heart on the estate that does not enter into the joy. We'll look at it next week, God willing. But don't wait till next week to come to the Savior. Let's take our hymnals and sing 702 wonderful grace of Jesus.

Our Father, we thank you for this hymn that says what we feel, grace that is greater than all of our sin. We thank you for this story that Jesus once told about the welcome that he received, the prodigal received when he came home to his father.

We thank you most of all that these things are true of you. And they're not just stories, they're not just songs, but it's the reality that this day in heaven is a father who is tickled pink to save sinners, who rejoices over them with singing.

Oh, forgive us for how slow we are to come with our sins to you, our Father. And forgive us that ever we've looked down upon a sinner and given them the impression that they can't have forgiveness until they deserve it.

But where would we be if you marked our sins? Thank you for the story of grace again this day. Thank you for the everlasting gospel. Make us to cling to Christ with thanksgiving and with joy.

[51:58] We ask in his name. Amen.