**THE PRODIGAL SON**

***Luke 15:11-32***

Sunday School Lesson

*Parables of Jesus Christ*

Week 8 – 12/10/2017

**Introduction:** The parable of the prodigal son is one of the most common parables studied in the New Testament. The reality for many Christians is that we can relate very well to this parable. This may be due to our own personal decisions that we have made in our past, or it may be a result of caring for someone who has made the same decisions as the prodigal son. While we often focus on the prodigal child in this parable, there are many lessons that are conveyed in the Text beyond just staying faithful to God. These lessons, that will be the focal point of are study, are applicable to every Christian.

1. WE MUST REALIZE THAT THE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLE IS TO SHOW US GOD’S LOVE FOR ALL SINNERS. (1-2, 20-24)
2. **Notice that there are two correlating parables taught prior to the parable of the prodigal son.** In our Text, we also find the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. Each of these parables, in addition to the parable of the prodigal son, shows us that God is actively looking for sinners to come unto Him. He is never satisfied with the number of believers (sheep) He already has in His fold! Just as the Lord is never satisfied; we should never be satisfied either. We should constantly be looking for one more lost soul to find their way back home to God. (Matthew 9:37-38)
3. **Notice that the Father’s lack of interference does not negate His love.** In verse 12 and 13, we see that the Father was willing to let the son take his possession and leave into a far country. Many times, people ponder why God does not intervene in a situation. They want to blame God for the decisions that are made, or they feel like God simply does not love them. The truth is that God, in His love, has given each of us a free will to make our own decisions. His desire is that we will ultimately choose to love Him and live for Him. We must also note that while He does not stop the prodigal child from leaving, He still actively looks for his return. The famine is God trying to get the person’s attention. (2 Samuel 21:1)
4. WE MUST REALIZE THAT THE RIOTOUS LIVING TOOK PLACE OUTSIDE OF THE FATHER’S HOUSE (13)
5. **Notice that the son understood that he would have to leave the Father’s house to find riotous living.** In verse 13, we see that the young man went into a far country before wasting his inheritance on riotous living. From this, we understand that the Father was not going to be an enabler of his sinful lifestyle. While He gave him that which he was entitled to, He was not going to allow the behavior to take place in His presence. Too often, Godly parents allow sin to continue in their home, and they neglect their responsibility as the leaders of the home when they refuse to confront and deal with it. (Proverbs 22:10)
6. **Notice that the son took his riotous living into a far country.** The use of the word “far” shows the extreme contrast between his Father’s house and the place of riotous living. Given that the Father in the parable represents our Heavenly Father, it shows us how righteous the Father’s house was. The son felt like he had to go all the way to the far country to live differently than how he lived at his Father’s house. First, this shows us how far we are away from God when we choose to live in sin. Secondly, this shows us how important it is that parents keep certain things out of the home. Do your children feel like they have to completely rebel against you in order to live sinfully, or have you given them an inheritance of sinful behavior? (Psalm 145:17; 2 Corinthians 12:14)
7. WE MUST REALIZE THAT THE PRODIGAL SON HAD VERY FLAWED THINKING. (12-13, 17-19)
8. **Notice that he thought it was worth it to live for himself first.** In verse 12, we see that he asks his Father for the portion that would fall to him. Essentially, he was asking for the inheritance early. This was typically reserved for after the Father had passed away. Being the younger child, he would have received a third of all that the Father had. In taking his inheritance early, he missed out on any further increase that his Father would earn. He had convinced himself that he would be better off taking less now. It would certainly be less work involved if he were to leave and go into the far country. Maybe he even thought that his Father was not doing enough for him? When we live in sin, we are trading treasures in Heaven for a few years of fun now. (Matthew 6:20)
9. **Notice that he thought his inheritance would last longer than it did.** In verse 14, we see that he had already spent all that he had. While we do not know the exact amount of time that passed after he left his Father’s house, it is clear that it was not a long period of time since his Father was still alive. Surely, he thought that his inheritance would take him farther than it did. Maybe he figured that there was plenty of opportunity in the area if his inheritance ever ran out. It seems certain that he was not expecting a famine to hit the country. When we decide to turn away from God, we become incapable of seeing very far down the road. The money is good; the fun is good; the friends are good; everything seems to just be going well. We know that there might be a reckoning day, but we always expect it to be further down the road than it really is. (Hebrews 11:25)
10. **Notice that he thought his sinful friends would help him out.** In verse 15, we see that he joined himself with a citizen of that country. Following the timeline of the parable, he does not get sent out to the pigs until after he had already joined with him. It is very likely that he had no idea what he was going to be asked to do. Keep in mind that the entire country was suffering from a famine, and it is certain that each person was looking out for his own interest. In verse 16, we see that no man gave unto him. This is so typical of living in sin. Every person is only concerned with what is best for himself. (Proverbs 14:20)
11. **Notice that he underestimated the love and forgiveness of his Father.** In verses 17-19, he reasons with himself that it would at least be better to be a servant for his father than to be stuck with the pigs. In his wildest dreams, he never thought that the Father would forgive him and be so excited to see him. This was part of the problem that he had to begin with. He did not realize how great his Father was. When we find ourselves stuck in sin, we often doubt or question whether God would really forgive us and accept us back. Additionally, we tell ourselves that the people in the church wouldn’t even want us to come back. There are many prodigals who never come back because they greatly underestimate the love of our Saviour. (Psalm 103:3; Luke 7:49)
12. WE MUST REALIZE THAT GOD’S CHASTENING IS NECESSARY FOR HUMILITY (14-17)
13. **Notice that the famine came right at the time when he was most vulnerable.** There is no doubt that God plans His chastening for times in our lives when it will have the greatest impact. He could have sent the famine at any time, yet we see that the famine occurred right when the prodigal had run out of money. He had to bring the prodigal to his lowest point. As Christians, we must be careful not to interfere when God is chastening someone. While we may have good intentions, how terrible would it be to provide food to someone that God is intentionally putting through a famine! We should instead take the approach of the Father and prayerfully await their return with open arms. If a brother is trying to make things right, we ought to be right there to feed them and help them. (Deuteronomy 8:5; Proverbs 19:18)
14. **Notice that he finally came to himself when he was eating with the pigs.** In verse 17, we see that he finally wakes up and realizes the failure of his way. This did not occur when he was eating with the wealthiest of the country. We must remember that God can do a much better job of bringing someone to their knees than we can. We must also remember that God will ultimately bring every person into humility before Him. We ought to gladly submit ourselves now. (Daniel 4:33)
15. WE MUST REALIZE THAT THE ELDER SON ALSO HAD VERY FLAWED THINKING. (25-32)
16. **Notice that the elder brother was angry with his Father when he should have been rejoicing.** In verse 28, we see that the older brother was angry with the events that had occurred. Keep in mind that this was his only brother that had returned. How cold must his heart have been to not even experience joy at the return of his brother. Although he stayed, he showed that he had a heart problem. (Gen. 4:5)
17. **Notice that the elder brother failed to appreciate all that he had.** In verse 29, he rebukes his Father for never giving him a fatted calf. The Father responds by reminding him that everything that He has belongs to him. The elder brother had made the same mistake as the prodigal in that he could only see the short term, and this caused him to be jealous at the restoration of his brother. We should never allow ourselves to be jealous when God brings someone back into the fold. Those who never left get to enjoy the blessings of being close to God and avoid the scars that come from this sinful world. (Prov. 23:17)

**CONCLUSION**: While there are many angles of this parable that we could recap in closing, let’s conclude by realizing that sin is never worth the cost that it brings. If we find ourselves contemplating whether the Christian walk is really worth it, we should quickly remind ourselves of this parable of the prodigal son. Additionally, if you have a friend or family member who has turned away from God, never give up on praying for them and awaiting their return.