

“ARE YOU the Prodigal’s Brother?”

Text: Luke 15

Introduction:

- The Lord Jesus is answering the critics -- the Pharisees and the religious Jews in their claim that Christ had to be a sinner for HE ate with sinners.
- Luke 15 gives us three tremendous pictures of the heart of God, the Father. In these stories we witness the concern in heaven over every lost person.
- We have the story of the **lost sheep**... and the **lost coin**... and the **lost son**... the prodigal son who spent all in riotous living who had left father and home to do as he pleased.
- What was Jesus answering?? **The indifference**, the criticalness of religious people who did not at all understand the heart of God nor their own heart condition.
- They felt that Christ could not be the Son of God and eat with sinners. If He was divine He should have known how horrible these people were, was their thought. And if He did eat with them he would be tainted by contact with them as well.
- The religious Jews endeavored to outwardly keep the law... ceremonially, openly they endeavored to appear very holy, good, above being breakers of the law.

I. CHRIST WAS REACTING TO THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS AMONG THE JEWS:

A. He spoke to the Scribes, Pharisees, and their attitudes toward the masses.

1. All three stories were given to speak to their hearts.
2. All three stories were answers to their spoken and unspoken ridicule of His love to the lost... to the sinner... to the wicked... those undone in their sin and lost condition.

B. Here was three tremendous stories of God, the Father’s love, His concern and the joy in heaven over one that repents.

1. The **lost sheep** --- people of the world are as lost sheep. (Isa 53:6)
 - a. They are undone, unable, unaware, scattered abroad, (Matt 9:36-38)
 - b. blind to true condition, in great need of a shepherd. (Eph. 2:1-3)
 - c. They needed one who in love would give their all to find the lost sheep.
2. The **lost coin** -- people are like the coin that was lost.
 - a. It was meaningful to the owner,
 - b. lost to any value, lost to the coin’s true significance,
 - c. The lady (owner) was burdened to find her lost coin as God is burdened for the lost sinner.

3. The **lost son** was undone in sin, wandering afar off -- destitute, brought low by the sinfulness of his heart.
 - a. He desired to have his way, to be independent, under no authority and fulfilling every wish, fulfilling the desires of his own lustful, sin laden heart.
 - b. He indeed is the picture of lost mankind -- selfish, self-determined, independent of God (the father) wanting to fulfill his every sinful whim, interest, and desire.
 - c. Also true salvation is pictured here. He came to himself, **repented** of his sin, **came back** to the father in faith and trust about the father's heart and desire for him.
 - d. He came deeply repentant, resolved to be but a slave, to have no position if he could just be relieved of his guilt, lost, sinful condition. God commands our repentance. This is seen over and over again in the Word of God. The unsaved need to repent as well as the saved when there is sin in the life. (See Acts
4. Here was the **father, daily waiting, yearning, desiring**, praying, in love, in great anguish of heart --daily watching for his return.

II. CHRIST REVEALED THE TRUE HEART CONDITION OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS.... THEY WERE DEPICTED IN THE HEART AND RESPONSES OF THE PRODIGAL'S BROTHER:

A. There were doubtless many good commendable traits in the elder brother.

1. He worked hard, stayed home, did not waste his life in riotous living.
2. He never disgraced his father, or the home, or the village, society to our knowledge.
3. He *spoke of always obeying his father*. But that could only be said, tongue in check for that was not and could not be totally true.
4. He was an upright, solid citizen compared to his prodigal brother. Probably many considered him a saint in comparison.

B. What was wrong with the elder brother? What was his heart like, while his outward actions on a daily basis may have been good, what was his reactions like? What was he on the inside?

1. How did he react to his brother coming home? How did he react that was as sinful, damaging to his life as the sins of the prodigal was to his life?
2. The Publicans and sinners were guilty of the obvious sins of the flesh... but the Pharisees and Scribes were as guilty of the sins of the spirit. (II Cor. 7:1)
 - a. Their outward actions may have been blameless -- at least these

religious leaders endeavored to make it look like they were totally blameless.

- b. But their inward reactions and attitudes were abominable.
(Matt 23:25-28)

*How important is obedience and diligence? They are not the only true tests of character. Jesus taught that the two great commandments are -- **to love God and to love others as you love yourself.** (Luke 10:25-28) But the elder brother broke both of these commandments for he did not love God (as represented by the father) nor did he love his brother.*

C. Here was a spirit of self-righteousness.

1. The elder brother openly denounced and announced the sins of his brother. He could not see his own sins. (18:9-14)
2. The Pharisees defined sin primarily in terms of outward actions, not inward attitudes. They completely missed the messages of Christ, like the sermons on the Mount, and its emphasis upon the inward attitudes and holiness of the heart.
3. It is so easy for us to also live a life of self-exaltation, self-protection, self-righteousness, self-satisfaction and self-approbation.

D. Here was a spirit of pride.

1. Another one of his failings was the spirit of pride! Just think, he had served his father all those years and had never disobeyed his father's will. (What a statement... but a false one!)
2. While his heart may have been in his work, in his pride and self-satisfaction his heart was totally out of step with his father. He, like Jonah, did the father's will, but not from the heart. (Eph. 6:6; Jonah 4)
3. He may have been a hard worker, and faithful qualities to be commended, but his work was not a labor of love that would please the father.

E. Here was also a spirit of indifference.

1. Picture him as Jesus sketched him.
 - a. Returning home from the fields we would come to a lovely farm stead and an aging loving father who must have had a heart of gold. (Don't forget that the father represents the heavenly Father.)
 - b. He had never left the farm; he was no prodigal; he had never turned his back on the father but had cared for the father's business.
 - c. But he was **self-satisfied, disinterested in others** and could care less about his brother.
 - d. Picture the scene for he had been told that his brother had come home. Doubtless he had seen the father watching daily for this son. This father had no doubt often spoke of him with great burden and concern.
 - e. But the elder brother did not know his brother was home until one of the servants told him.
2. Here was the **elder brother** who all this time had feasted, had plenty, and ate well. And his brother who was lost to the family was in need, starving of body and soul.
3. He often sat at the table of this well-do-do home. And he had no interest or

concern about his brother's life or condition. There is no mention of any questions asked -- no mention of an empty chair.

4. No suggestion that he ever talked to his father about his aching heart. No evidence that he ever said, *"Dad, my heart is aching for my brother, oh, what can we do? What will happen to him? Is there something we can do? How can we reach him?"*

His thought may have been.. why should I share anything with this horrible brother. He deserves his condition for look at the shame he has brought on me, on my father, and on the village, etc.

F. Here was also the spirit of self-pity; "you never gave me a kid..."

1. **He has a grievance in his heart.** His self-pity wrecked any happiness he could have had over his brother's return. He nursed his reaction of self-pity.
 - a. We can't have rejoicing over souls and have self-pity at the same time.
 - b. We can't have resentment and happiness in the Lord at the same time.
2. **He destroyed the oneness in the family.** *"This thy brother... thy son."*
 - a. There was a loss of fellowship between the father and his son who had stayed at home -- if there had even been fellowship in the first place.
 - b. He did not have the father's heart nor did not care about that.
3. **He had distorted values...**
 - a. He wanted an apology about not having a kid.
 - b. He had more concerned about his own fancied good rather than love for a lost brother.
 - c. He was concerned, interested, and desirous about the trivial.

G. He had an unwillingness to enter. vs. 31, 32

1. **He was an angry person.**
2. **His father tried to minister to this eldest son.**

Conclusion:

1. It is easy for any of us to be indifferent, cold or lukewarm about the lost around us.
2. We need to look within for possibly while we are in the Father's family we are out of tune with the Father's heart.
3. Could it be that we are interested in our inheritance in Christ, our position, in all that will be ours in a day to come and at the same time we are *"full of I don't care"* about the lost. Could it be that we are more interested in our position of service within the local church than we are the lost outside the fold?
4. Maybe we look upon the lost with a certain amount of criticalness about their sinfulness and don't recognize our sinful indifference to the terrible plight of the lost. Is this your condition?