

Adult Sunday School Lesson
Nassau Bay Baptist Church
March 14, 2021

Read Luke 15:11-32

In this passage we find the *Parable of the Loving, Waiting Father* or the *Parable of the Bitter Son*, often known as the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*.

One of two sons takes an early inheritance, squanders it, finds himself penniless and friendless, goes home in hopes of being taken in as a servant, and is welcomed back as a son by his father who was waiting for him. His brother is angry and bitter. His father is wise.

Squandering (11-14)

For today's discussion, the squandering is not the focus. The one thing we must accept is that the son's selfish squandering represents our selfish sinning. His case is extreme, no doubt, but our case is extreme also. We justify ourselves as being less sinful, more compliant and faithful, but when we look through the Father's eyes, we can see that our lives are more about receiving and enjoying than about giving and obeying.

Surviving (15-16)

We inch closer to our focus when we see the son go from prosperity to famine and that he is forced to feed swine and to eat their food. Note that when we walk outside of obedience to our Lord, we will find ourselves spiritually feeding swine and eating their food.

Coming to Himself (17-19)

Now we begin to see the edge of our focus. He came to Himself. A swine feeder was not who he was. When he was feeding swine, he was not himself. His view had been perverted by his sin. His mirror had been distorted. He did not see through His Father's eyes. He judged himself falsely, as he had all along.

Sin is the act of judging ourselves falsely. We trust our vision and not the Lord's. We lean upon our own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5-6) This is the tip of the spear of arrogance. The only way out of sin and arrogance is to look at ourselves through the Father's eyes and agree. (Psalm 51; 1 Samuel 16:7) Then we see that we are not worthy, and we humble ourselves. (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6)

The son did this.

Running to His Son (20)

His father saw his son. He had compassion upon his son. And he ran, and he kissed him. Seeing, compassion, joy, and love. These are the marks of our Heavenly Father, and these are the marks of followers of Christ.

Seeing is no small thing. How many fathers have turned their backs upon their sons. The son had turned his back upon his father. He did not look for his father. He did not desire his father.

Compassion does not deny sin. Compassion recognizes sin, but even more, recognizes the destructiveness of sin and focuses concern upon who the person was born/created to be rather than the sin that has marred the person. Over and over again, Jesus had compassion upon people.

Running shows priority. It shows joy. The son was the father's priority. The son was the father's joy. While the sin was not irrelevant, the sin was not relevant at the moment. Hope abounded that the sin could be overcome and that the son could be redeemed.

Worth and Welcome (21-24)

The son professed his unworthiness. The father did not immediately deny the son's unworthiness to be his son, but rather began to treat him like an honored guest. His love for his son overshadowed the son's sin. He welcomed him as he would a most honored guest: robe, signet, feast. These three emblems signified, "you are an honored guest in my home," "you have authority in my home," and "you are the cause of great joy in my home."

Unworthiness did not prevent the father from proclaiming the son's sonship. Once the sin was cleansed and forgiven, the son was as worthy as ever to be his son, though the loss of inheritance could not be remedied.

Bitter Son (25-32)

The older son was working to make the home better. His brother had forsaken work and had forsaken making the home better. He discovered the feast, but he would not join in. He was bitter and angry at his brother and had been for a long time. Now he was angry with his father.

This son is the contrast to Jesus. We know of Jesus as the *firstborn among many*. We who are saved are joint-heirs with Jesus.

Jesus is not bitter, but rather rejoices. Jesus is not angry, but rather gives His life that other siblings may return to the Father. Jesus does not criticize the Father. He is in tune with the Father, doing what the Father does, watching, having compassion, running to those who have been lost, kissing them, calling them Home.

Notice, the restoration to sonship was the Father's decision. The return in humility and unworthiness, confessing his sins, was the son's decision. The son could have remained lost. He could have remained dead. The father did not compel him or cause him to come home. The son had the information he needed (gospel) and acted upon the compassion he knew his father would show.