

“Hope of a Loving Father” (Prodigal Son)
Luke 15:11-32 Dr. Scott Arnold
First Baptist Church, Grand Blanc. 6-15-2006

Introduction: (Remembering Our Dads)

Role of a Father: Steadfast Love and Hope

Fathers have an essential role as spiritual leaders in the home and in the church and community. Children need fathers who walk humbly with their God, children need male role models who exhibit faith, steadfast love, and enduring hope and optimism. My father, Gene Arnold, was such a man. Last July he passed away and I know that he is in heaven. He had a way of encouraging people, seeing and bringing out their best. This was true with his family as well as in our church, the college where he worked, and in the various community groups he was involved with. He believed in God, and witnessed his faith in God to many people.

This week I took quiet time to consider that many ways God has blessed me, my family, and our church. I look around Grand Blanc and see many people, yet I wonder where they are in relationship to God our Heavenly Father. This week, through VBS, I pray that we will reach many children with the gospel message of Jesus Christ. I pray that we will continue to build community, and grow for God’s Kingdom.

But along life’s road, within almost every family, there is bound to be rivalry, misunderstanding, envy, and selfishness. Jesus gave this parable as a story that almost anyone could understand and most anyone could relate to in some way.

I. A Father and Two Sons. (Two **Types** of children) (v. 11-12))

“There was a man who had two sons.

Lk 15:12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

In most every family you have children who are “pleasers” and those who are “rebels”. Some are obedient and thoughtful, while others are willful and selfish. The father in this story did not have to divide up the inheritance, but he allowed the younger son the freedom to learn the hard way. In time the father knew that both of his sons would need to experience reconciliation.

God is aware of the rift and distance that develops between people because of the sinful decisions people make. God has a steadfast love that sees past the mistakes into a future of repentance, forgiveness and healing.

II. From the Posse to the Pigs. (**selfishness** and sinfulness) (v. 13-16)
(From the Party to the Pits)

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

The younger son felt a sense of false-assurance. He abused his freedom and tried to buy his happiness, tried to buy his friends respect. For a while he was living in an illusion of happiness, being pleasure-driven. But in fact he was living a lie, fooling himself.

Sin works that way, it can make a person feel good for a while, until the foolishness of their way of living catches up with them. They come to the end of their resources, and the fun times are replaced by hard times and sin's consequence, suffering and brokenness.

III. Realizing One's Mess.

(**Humility** and Repentance) (v.17)

"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!'"

When a person comes to their senses, they can no longer pretend to be happy without God in their life. They realize that they need to be right with the Heavenly Father. They begin to hunger for what they may have once had, or something more that they had forsaken before. In every sinner's heart and mind there is a deep regret. This regret is not just for the foolishness of sinful ways, this regret is rooted in shame and guilt. How can they make things right again? How can there be redemption? How can there be hope and a future in the midst of their hurt and brokenness?

(Poss- Words from "Fix You").

IV. Repenting of Sin (v. 18-19)

(**Turning** to God)

¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned^f against heaven and against you.

Lk 15:19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

In the moment of reflection and remorse of one's sin, there is a shining, steady, light that is trying to reach into the soul of a sinner. Not only did God create the conscience that convicts us of sin, but also God inspires hope for healing, hope for reconciliation within the distraught souls of those who go astray. God's love can shine a light of hope into the darkest of times, into the darkest troubles we may go through.

V. A Father's Hope and Heart (v. 20-24)

(**Unconditional** Love)

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."⁹

Lk 15:21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.^h I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

Lk 15:22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robeⁱ and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger^j and sandals on his feet.

Lk 15:23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

Lk 15:24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again;^k he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

The Father's hope had been realized. The day he had longed for was here, the son was returning. God our heavenly Father never forgets us, even when we have gone astray. God longs for the day that a sinner repents and comes home. The action of returning is similar to the action of coming to the altar at a time of prayer. God knows the heart of a

person, and words are secondary to act of humbling oneself, the act of coming home, the act of contrition and confession.

The father runs to the son (an act that was undignified in those days). After the beautiful embrace, a time when unconditional love was displayed by the father, the son expressed his regret and asked for forgiveness. After confessing his sin and unworthiness, the father wastes no time. He summons for his servants to bring the ring and the robe that he has had ready all this time while he was away. The father had remained steadfast in prayer, waiting for his return, prepared to restore him.

God our father is ready for the time when people realize their need for Him. God welcomes us when we take the step of faith to trust in his forgiveness. Jesus Christ paid the price for our sin, we can turn to God and be forgiven, not because of what we have done, but because of what he did for us upon the cross. The Heavenly Father awaits those who will confess their need for salvation. The church is to be a place that reaches out to lost sinners, a place that welcomes people into the Kingdom of Heaven with compassion and open arms. In fact, we are to go out and meet people before they enter the building of the church. (Our welcome team is planning a ministry where we meet people in the parking lot, and help people before they come into the building. We will provide visitor parking, escorts, umbrellas as needed, and assistance to people). The point here is that the father saw the son coming from a distance, and he went out to welcome him. The application is that the church needs to be welcoming, needs to go out of it's way, and into the roads of life, to welcome people into God's Kingdom. Don't think about where a person has been, instead, think about the joy our Heavenly Father has in welcoming the prodigal sons and daughters back into Kingdom. There is indeed no greater joy than to be an ambassador of reconciliation, representing God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, as we embrace and welcome sinners, and lead them into the Kingdom of heaven. Indeed, there may be times when we look foolish to some, but in God's understanding, the work of His grace in the gospel of salvation is wisdom.

VI. The Hard Heart of the Older Brother (25-32)

(The **injustice** of grace)

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ^{Lk 15:26} So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.

^{Lk 15:27} 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' ^{Lk 15:28} "The older brother became angry^m and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ^{Lk 15:29} But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years

I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ^{Lk 15:30} But when this son of yours who has squandered your propertyⁿ with prostitutes^o comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

^{Lk 15:31} " 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

^{Lk 15:32} But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

With the older brother, there was already a problem that stemmed from the time his younger brother had left. He was filled with anger and resentment. The impression is that he has been dutiful and obedient without any reward. In fact, he has been blessed and yet not aware of his blessing. He has not been filled with thanksgiving in his heart such that he is willing to share and be forgiving to his younger brother. Indeed, the older brother also needs to repent and be made right with his father.

Some people may not appreciate the application of this part of story. But Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and religious people who were hearing this message. He had spoken to the lost sinner listening by referring to the younger son, but now he had a message to challenge those who were religious to also see their own sin, a sin of self-righteousness and false spiritual pride.

The Lord is starting to step on the toes of us in the church who sometimes look at newcomers as receiving too much attention. Why, they are new to the church, how can they receive so much attention? Why is it that I am being forgotten? This is unfair, this is wrong. When newcomers start getting involved with ministry, it is all too easy for people who have been in a church a long time to start complaining about the imperfections and problems of those who are new. Instead of getting to know them and work with them, it is all too easy to be envious of their enthusiasm, and too easy to analyze and critique their behavior than to get to know them, welcome their presence, and work shoulder to shoulder for the common cause of Christ.

The fact is, (see scripture) all of heaven rejoices when one lost sinner repents and is brought into God's Kingdom.

“This is the message of Jesus - this is the good news -- God WANTS to accept the repentant sinner.

Faithful religious people can still find it hard to accept God's acceptance of sinners. The problem is the difficulty of truly accepting love, forgiveness, and healing. It's often much harder to receive than to give -- because then you must go to the place beyond earning, deserving, and rewarding to the place of surrender and trust. And OH how we want to EARN, to DESERVE what we get -- then the merit is in us, and not in the one who gives to us.” - Eve McMaster Emmanuel Mennonite Church, Gainesville FL.

Conclusion: Who are you most like?

A. The Younger son who needs **to be forgiven**. (Inadequacy) Eaten Corn Cob.

CONFESS YOUR NEED – REPENT

B. The Older son who needs to needs **to forgive**. (Overadequacy) Steak.

CONFESS YOUR PRIDE – REPENT

God our Father desires that we all repent of our sin, whether our sin be that of what we have done wrong, or our attitude that can be sinful of what others have done wrong. WE NEED TO LEARN from the FORGIVENESS of our Heavenly Father.

Invitation

