**Luke 15:11-32**

Introduction

I. What is your view of God and where do you get your view of God?

II. In this parable, Jesus gives us a picture of himself (which reflects his heavenly Father) that is foundational to our relationship with God

The Passage

I. Seeing the parable in its context

A. The situation (v. 1-2)

The Pharisees are offended by Jesus’ motley crew of followers

 B. Jesus response

1. He tells 3 parables that all have the same basic theme: the joy and celebration that occurs when something is lost and then found

2. In the context, these broken sinners gathering around Jesus are those lost people who have been found, and Jesus is celebrating that (and the Pharisees should be too)

3. The Pharisees have not fully seen God’s heart of love, grace, and joy for sinners who turn to him.

 C. “The Prodigal Son” is an unfortunate label for this story

1. The story is not primarily about a son but a Father

2. The key point is not that the son is prodigal (= “wastefully or recklessly extravagant”) but the Father is prodigal in his love for both his sons.

3. Apart from the father, the older brother is probably the next most important character in that he represents the Pharisees and their refusal to join in the celebration

II. The Father’s heart for his younger son(v. 11-24)

A. The younger son’s behavior

1. It amounts to a total rejection and humiliation of his father

a. Asking for his inheritance before his father dies is like telling his father, “I wish you were dead.” (v. 12)

 b. He wants to leave quickly and get as far away as possible (v. 13)

c. He hits rock bottom (v. 14-16)

2. His turning point and repentance (v. 17-20)

B. The Father’s response to his younger son

1. An extravagant welcome home

-“while he was a long ways off”

 -“Filled with compassion”

 -“runs to his son”

-“throws himself on his son’s neck”

-“smothers his son with kisses

-a robe, ring, and sandals = restoring his son to the honor and dignity of a son

 -calls for a huge celebration

2. What the son learned

He had underestimated his dad’s extravagant love and grace for him simply because he was his son

III. The father’s heart for his older son (v. 25-32)

A. The older son’s behavior

1. Notice the emotional response: anger rather than compassion (v. 25-28)

 2. Notice the fundamental complaint: that’s not fair! (v. 29-30)

3. Notice his understanding of his relationship with his dad

-“slaving away for you”

-“obeying your orders”

= He views his relationship in terms of duty and obligation. He sees it more like a master and hired hand than a father and son

B. The father’s response to his older son

1. He actually leaves the party to come out to him and talk with him (v. 28)

2. He expresses how he views his relationship with his son

-“my son” = you’re not just a hired hand, you’re my son

-“You are always with me” = what matters to me is that we are together, not that you just obey all my orders

-“all that I have is yours” = it’s always been yours, not because you have to work for it and earn it, but because you’re my son

IV. Notice this Father’s “prodigal” love for both his sons

A. =an unconditional love that brings him to do things that are sacrificial and even humiliating for his boys

B. Consider Paul’s description of love in 1 Cor 13

C. Is this your view of God?

Conclusion

Where do you need to return to God?

A. You may relate with the younger son and need to turn from your independent ways and receive the father’s love

B. You may relate with the older son and need to turn from your duty and obligation to enjoy your relationship with him and his love for you simply because you are his child

**Discussion Questions**

1. The story of the prodigal son is very familiar to most of us. As we considered this familiar story again on Sunday, what did you see in a new light, or what did you see in a deeper light?

2. If you’re honest with yourself, what has most shaped your own view of Jesus/God?

3. How does this picture of the father square with the picture of God you have in your mind? If it is hard for you to believe God is like this father, why is that? What barriers or perspectives make that challenging for you?

4. Which brother do you most relate with, and how specifically do you see that brother’s perspective playing out in your life?

5. How do you feel called to respond as a result of hearing this passage (are you called to a change in perspective, to repentance, to share something with others, etc.)?