Alive Again

Luke 15:11-32

Key Verse 15:20

*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.*

For many of you folks here, this may be your first time at a conference or a church event. And you may be asking yourselves, “Why am I here? What’s this passage on Luke 15 about the prodigal son all about?”

---Now this passage has many themes and points we can all learn from. But the main theme is, the Father’s love. I pray that for those who have yet to experience this incredible love of God, our Father, may receive it today thru the word. And for those who have already experienced it, I pray that y’all may be reminded of your identity in Christ.

**Prayer.**

Now throughout the gospels, you’ll frequently hear about Jesus telling people parables, or stories. Jesus loved to tell parables to describe in simpler ways for everyone to understand what the kingdom of God was like.

--Here Jesus says that there was a certain man who had 2 sons.

--Younger son comes up to asking him for his share of his inheritance.

--In Jewish culture = drop dead. Selfish. Rude. Disrespectful. You just didn’t do that.

--Then packed up, said peace out, and set out for a distant land, where he spent living his life wildly in sin, getting smashed, drunk, high, gambling, wasting his money on hookers, gambling.

-Sure enough, he runs out of money pretty quickly, squandering it as foolishly as he did. Superficial friends desert him, no more cash money, and ends up a bum.

-Famine hits the land, so he gets a job feeding pods to pigs.

-Absolutely a pathetic situation that he is in. Jesus was trying to illustrate that this son had hit rock bottom.

-he had taken the path of sin, and had ended up like everyone else who had gone down this path: at a dead end.

While he was dwelling in his pathetic situation that he was in, something happened. (read v.17-19)

* interesting how the first thing he remembered, when he came to his senses, was his Father’s house.
* Even his father’s servants, had food to spare. Even they were better off than he was.

Seeing the current pathetic situation that he was in, I couldn’t help but wonder to myself…

* why did the father give his son his share, even after his son had been so rude and disrespectful towards him, not even caring if his father was alive or dead?
* How was his father able to let his son go, very well knowing that his son would squander his wealth living his life in sin. And very well knowing, that there was a good chance that his father would never see him again. How?

- Because the Father loved his son.

- Because as his father, he honored and respected his son’s decision. Regardless of how foolish it was.

- Love isn’t real, unless there is a choice, to love or not to love. Love can not be experienced, unless there is free will involved.

Folks, this is the very same with God, our Father. He isn’t in the control business trying to control every aspect of our lives. He isn’t saying don’t do this or don’t do that. But instead, he has given us the free will to take his blessing and enjoy it together with him, or spend it selfishly apart from him, which only leads to unhappiness and a dead end.

The reason God is able to let us go, as hard as that may be for any parent, is because God knows, that apart from his Love, his everlasting water, the things of this world will leave our throats parched. Thirsty. Wanting more, but never being able to satisfy. God knows that nothing in this world, can compare to the richness of his grace and love.

* so he is able to let us go, so that when we experience this world, we can come to ourselves, and realize that “man, God’s love is as real as it gets.”

Evidently, the Father’s decision to let his son go, ended up being the best thing to do. As it was the goodness of his father’s love, hundreds and thousands of miles away, in the middle of nowhere, in the midst of the younger son’s lowest point in life, that the son remembered that his Father was a good man. All his father would do was give, give and give some more. Yet here he was, with no one giving him anything.

Remembering that his father was a good man, gave his son some hope that, “hey, maybe I can go back to my father, even if it means forfeiting my sonship, and becoming a servant.”

* **Only after losing everything this son once had, was he finally able to be appreciative of everything his Father had given him, and done for him.**
* **A sad truth about this world: difficult for most people to appreciate something they have, unless it’s taken from them.**

Applies to me as well. About this time last year, I sprained my ankle pretty badly playing some futbol. That was my first time spraining anything. And up until that point, I had always been careless and pretty reckless when playing sports. But this injury would change my life forever. I was on crutches for about a month, and man, was my life tough. I couldn’t sleep comfortably, walk on my own, I had to take a shower on one foot, cause it was too painful to put any weight on my right foot. Couldn’t even use the bathroom without much difficulty. I told myself and God that I would never take little things like walking from point a to point b, running, and even standing up properly, or even sitting down and being able to sleep comfortably. And thankfully God healed my ankle fully, and I thank him everyday that I got two working legs and even being able to stand up here without any pain or crutches.

Everybody at one point or another, screwed up in his or her life. And everyone is in need of a second chance. I got good news for y’all. God is the God of second chances. This is what makes our God so awesome. Unique. And Holy.

v.20, “so he got up and went back 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.

 - absolutely ridiculous!

- I mean wasn’t this the same son, who had so selfishly and rudely disrespected his father? Wishing his father had died? Wasn’t this the same son that squandered all his father’s hard earned money on getting drunk, high, gambling and spending it on prostitutes?

- how did the father respond like this?

* v.20 reads “while he was still a long way off, his Father saw him and was filled with compassion for him;”
* Tells us that his father was looking out for his son’s hopeful return day and night.
* When his father saw him, did he felt angry, bitterness, and resentment towards him? Not at all! All he could feel was this grown man compassion for his son, and felt nothing but love for him, which drove him to run out after his son.
* **In jewish culture, it was a shameful thing for an adult to run. They weren’t supposed to be like running like the father had just done.**

And when he had finally reached his son, he threw his arms around his son and kissed him.

 -Greek for this word kissed=to kiss repeatedly.

Keep in mind, that at this point, his son hadn’t taken a bath in weeks if not months. He smelled absolutely repulsive. Just filthy. Yet despite all this, his father didn’t care. Such a minute thing wouldn’t hinder him from showering his love upon his son.

The father didn’t run up to his son and say, “BOY YOU STANK! Go take a shower and then if you’re clean enough, I’ll welcome you with my hug and kisses. No!

-As stinky and filthy as that might have been. He accepted him **just as he was!**

**Absolutely a key point!**

**What’s Jesus telling us here about God’s love and forgiveness?**

**-that it is instant and complete!**

**-no pre-requisites required from us. No grudges held by God.**

**-The God who knows all things. Who sees all things. Has chosen to remember our sins no more. He has no memory of it any more!**

**-**Father didn’t say, “Sonny, I demand a pay back of your debt instantly. With interest added. Once you pay it back, then and only then, might I consider forgiving you.”

The father didn’t see his son as a sinner he had to avoid until his son cleaned himself up, pay back the inheritance he had so foolishly spent. Instead, he saw him as a son who needed love and forgiveness to be restored back into the family.

It’s a common belief amongst Christians that “Oh, before I can go back to God, I got to clean myself up spiritually. I must right my wrongs, then, maybe I can go back to church and be accepted by God again.”

-Remember, the Father accepted his son just as he was.

-While the son was still unclean.

-**Likewise, we come to God just as we are.**

**-Sinful as that may seem.**

**-Because the only thing that can restore us, and cleanse us from our sins, is not our own efforts or self-righteousness, but God’s love for us. Which cleanses us pure from all sin.**

You know what the craziest thing about all this is? Up until this point, the son had yet to say a word. Yet his Father had already fully forgiven him.

Imagine, how the son had felt up until this point. During the long walk back home, the son’s guilt, shame, and condemnation must’ve been eating up inside of him. Most likely fearful and anxious as to how his Father would respond to the sins he had committed.

-And when he saw his dad running at him, he was probably thinking “omg, he’s gunna kill me”. But instead, he was greeted with kisses and hugs.

-**Such a love can only come from God our Father. Amen that such a love exists. Available for all of us today. All we got to do is receive!**

Now finally, in v.21, the son spoke up. Saying “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

-One thing I could see from this younger son throughout this passage was that he kept it REAL.

 - He had really hurt his father. He had been so disrespectful towards his father, who had only shown him unconditional love.

 -It’s definitely not an easy thing for a person to admit that they have sinned against God.

-Cause to admit that you messed up, means that you have taken full responsibility for one’s consequences. He knew that he was no longer worthy to be called his father’s son. Yet he still gathered himself together, and set out back to his father.

How did the father respond to his son’s apology speech?

-Ignored him completely! His father did not allow his son to dwell on his shame, guilt, and condemnation any longer!

-In fact, his father responded by saying, “Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

-Amazing words from the father.

-Before this, the son had said: “Father I am no longer worthy”

-Likewise, we say to ourselves, “I’m not worthy. I’m a bad person, too wicked, and too sinful to receive God’s love. Why should God love me?”

But what is God saying? God is saying, “I WANT YOU!” “YOU ARE WORTHY. YOU ARE MY CHILD!”

-Because this son was dead to the Father. He was lost. And for his Father to see his son again meant everything to him. He had literally gotten his son back from the dead.

How was this son dead? Because of sin. How was he lost? Because of sin.

This means that he was not always dead. Nor he was not always lost.

* but sin had stolen his identity.
* Isn’t it interesting how it says in v.17 “when he came to his senses”. He realized that what he was doing wasn’t who he was. He realized that wasn’t who he really was.
* Likewise, when we repent, we have acknowledged that sin stole our identity. We were dead in our sins. So to acknowledge that and go back to the Father is all that the Father wants. Because he knows that we have realized who we truly are. That our identity is found in God’s love.

Then they had a feast and began to celebrate.

 -The Father’s love isn’t mentioned here in this passage. But we know of it because it is always shown thru the father’s actions.

The father didn’t say to the son, “alright son, I love you, now go read and study the bible about me. No. God’s love is very personal. It’s intimate. It isn’t some foreign and superficial kind of love. It’s very real.

-Meanwhile, the elder son is working in the field, and he hears music and dancing.

-Just wanted to mention, that it’s one thing to hear music. But how do you hear dancing? Folks, in the kingdom, when they party, they party hard! I’m telling ya. Jesus is saying that in his Father’s house, he wants great feasting and celebrating. I guarantee you that they are popping bottles in the kingdom of God!

So the elder son calls up a servant, and asks him “what’s going on?”

* Servants like, haven’t you heard? Your bro is back. So father threw a party.
* You would think he would’ve been joyful or at least welcome his brother. But instead, he became furious.
* **What was his problem? Didn’t sin like his younger bro. Worked hard. Yet what was wrong?**
* **Pride, selfishness, and bitterness/resentment.**
* **He thought that by his good works, he deserved his Father’s favor.**
* **By equating his self-worth to his good works, he became prideful.**
* **Quite frankly, he could care less about his relationship between him and his father. It was more of a boss-employer relationship, vs. a father-son relationship.**
* **He used words like “slaving”. Clearly showed his bitterness and resentment towards his father. Resentment = relationship killer.**
* **Outwardly, he seemed flawless. Yet that was his very problem. He wasn’t real with himself. Didn’t examine his deepest desires. Why? Because his pride had blinded him.**

**---Testimony---**

**close with this:**

Father’s response in v.31 = epic.

* he says: “my son, you are always with me. Everything I have is yours.”
* Really…? ***EVERYTHING?***
* This was the main point that both these sons had missed.
* Because they were both selfish, and judged their self-worth based off their works, (younger son worthless, because he messed up. Elder son, self-righteous, because of his good works) their relationship with their father became severed. They couldn’t enjoy everything their father had, together with him, because they had missed the point, that everything their father had was theirs also!

God doesn’t love us based off our performance. Be it bad or good. But rather, he loves us, based off who he is. And what he did for us on the cross 2000 years ago.

He is Love. And he is the same, yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

God isn’t some joy kill, that’s trying to hide things from us. In fact, quite the opposite. Everything that he has is ours! However it is supposed to be enjoyed together with him. In union and in love. Not apart from him. All that the father wanted was a relationship with his sons. Likewise, all God wants, is to have a relationship with us, and enjoy everything together.