

- E) However, the father completely ignores the son's speech, turning to one of his servants and requesting the best clothing, a ring (a family symbol), and sandals for his bare feet (15:22). The son goes from destitution to restoration.
- F) The picture of restoration continues as the father calls for the preparation of a grand meal (the fattened calf, 15:23). This was a truly special and unusual occasion.
- G) The father's declaration to the household is profound, declaring a celebration for his "dead son" who has come back to life, for his "lost son" who has been found (15:24).

4) Self-Righteousness ~ Losing Focus On The Father

- A) Everyone is not pleased with the restoration of the lost son. As the older brother comes in from working, he inquires as to what all the commotion is within the house (15:25-26).
- B) Finding out that his little brother has returned (15:27) fills the older brother with rage and a total refusal to join the celebration (15:28). Even the father comes out of the house and "pleads" with his faithful son to join in the celebration.
- C) The son explodes toward his father, wanting to know why his faithfulness has never been rewarded. Where is the justice?! Why is his life-sucking & prostituting brother being treated as though he has been the faithful one (15:29-30)?
- D) Graciously the father responds to his eldest son's more hidden (although not any longer) sin by reminding his son that all the father's possessions have always been the eldest son's possessions, too (15:31).
- E) But the father will not let the son's attitude stand, calling him to recognize his brother and place the highest of joys upon finding that which was lost (15:32). This is a time for joy, not a time for questions of justice and fairness!

I See Lost People

Long Beach Alliance Church • July 20th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**FOR THIS SON OF MINE WAS DEAD
AND HAS COME TO LIFE AGAIN; HE
WAS LOST AND HAS BEEN FOUND.
AND THEY BEGAN TO CELEBRATE.
~LUKE 15:24 (NASB)**

1) Rebellion ~ I Did It 'My Way'

- A) The audience to which Jesus is speaking consists of tax collectors and sinners (one group, Luke 15:1), Pharisees and scribes (second group, 15:2), and His own disciples (third group, 16:1).
- B) Through the whole of Luke 15, a chapter which is about a lost coin, a lost sheep, and a lost son, the context of the audience is important to keep in mind.
- C) In Luke 15:11 we are introduced to the three main characters of our story, a man and his two sons (15:11).
- D) Without hesitation, the younger son unmasks his disrespect and rebelliousness toward his father*, requesting his share of his father's "life" (his being, or estate, 15:12).

* Since he is the younger son (Luke 15:12), he would be entitled to one-third of the estate upon his father's death. The older son would be entitled to a two-thirds share as "firstborn." Estates were usually not divided until the death, or near-death, of the father of the household. The son's request would have deeply offended the strong sense of family and respect within Jewish families (Various sources, especially *Luke 9:51-24:53, Baker Exegetical Commentary, Darrell L. Bock, Pages 1309-1310*).

- E) Despite this devastating request, the father does not resist the desire of the son to sever the relationship, and graciously divides his "life" (wealth) and gives it to his rebellious son.
- F) Soon thereafter, the son "gathered everything together" (converts his inheritance into cash) and departs for a distant country (15:13). The departure is presented as an attempt to escape and become independent of the father.
- G) Once in the foreign land, the son "squanders" his life ("being") with "loose living" (15:13), which primarily included prostitutes (15:30). Ultimately, the son loses everything.

2) Realization ~ Coming To Your Senses

- A) As often happens, "natural circumstances" (famine) cause the son to hit rock-bottom (15:14). The circumstances of the younger son become dire because of his own foolishness and the social situation in which he finds himself (15:14).
- B) In the hopelessness of the situation, the son prudently goes and gets a menial labor job feeding pigs (15:15). Feeding swine was the most humiliating job for a Jew, since pigs were unclean animals (cf. Leviticus 11:7, Deuteronomy 14:8).
- C) In the midst of his humiliating circumstances, the son wishes he could eat the food of pigs (15:16). The pigs are better off than the son! He is starving, alone, and destitute (15:16).
- D) Drenched in the refuse of his choices, the son "comes to his senses" (his brain turns on). Despite his employment, the younger son recognizes that his father is a better master than where his choices have taken him (15:17).
- E) Seeing his father accurately sends the son off on a desperate attempt to "earn" his way back into his father's graces (15:17) as a servant, knowing that he is already as good as dead to his father after his rebellious offences.

- F) The son shows the truth of his repentance in the full knowledge that he has first sinned against God, and secondly against his father (15:18).
- G) His plan is clear, he will return to his father's household and request a role as a servant, rather than a son (15:19). The son rightly recognizes that his sin has separated him hopelessly from his father and as such, he doesn't deserve any special regard or treatment.[†]

3) Restoration ~ A Father's Love Revealed

- A) The story is filled with tension at this point! How will the father react to the son's return? What will the father say to the son? Will the son be able to return as a servant? Will this result in rejection? What is about to happen?!
- B) The text emphasizes that the father spots the son from far away, seeing him coming back home (15:20). The father has never stopped looking for his son. His love has never been diminished by the son's sin. He has spent every day seeking his lost son, and now he sees him coming.
- C) Seeing his lost son, the father is filled with compassion, and breaks out from his home in a dead sprint and "falls on his neck" (embraces) his son, kissing him (15:20). Breaking all Jewish protocol, the father lavishes his love on his lost son.
- D) The son immediately breaks into his pre-rehearsed speech, hoping against hope that he will be accepted as a servant in his father's household (15:21).

† His request is simply for daily care and sustenance as a day laborer, the lowest of three classes of laborers. A slave was like part of the family, although part of the lower class. The day laborer was hired only on special occasions for one day at a time, and so was less cared for. The son's request shows that he wants to be a minimal burden. He is prepared to be the lowest of the low. As one of these laborers, he still will be better off than he now is on his own. He accepts the consequences of his choices. There are no excuses, only confession and a humble request. The picture shows what repentance looks like: no claims, just reliance on God's mercy and provision. (Various sources, especially *Luke 9:51-24:53, Baker Exegetical Commentary*, Darrell L. Bock, Pages 1312-1313).