

A Father and His Three Sons (Part 2)

Luke: All Things New



Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



Sermon Text

Luke 15:1-2, 11-32



Big Idea

The younger and older sons in this parable are more alike than we realize. They both want the Father's stuff without the Father Himself. They just have different ways of getting at it. The younger packs up and heads for the brothel. The older puts on his Sunday best and heads for the church. But both are lost. And both need the grace that only the third Son, Jesus, can offer.

(1) The Approach (vv. 25-27)

This older son, it seems, has been so caught up in his serving and working for the father that he is actually starting to lose touch with the father himself. He may be home, but the sense we get here is that he is perhaps further away than the prodigal ever was. He is near in vicinity but distant in heart. This is the danger of empty religion. You do things for God to get stuff from God—not because you have a loving relationship with God. And as we shall see, this approach to fulfillment, as with the Prodigal's, will ultimately falter and fail. There will be a fallout. What begins looking pretty good on the outside will end in a mess and leave you miserable and broken, empty and outside the party.

(2) The Fallout (vv. 28-30)

This older son has created this façade for himself: “I’m the good one. I’m the one who listens and obeys.” But this façade is starting to crack.

- Crack #1: Anger
- Crack #2: Comparison
- Crack #3: Accusation
- Crack #4: Hyperbole
- Crack #5: Hardness
- Crack #6: Slavery
- Crack #7: Idolatry

(3) The Way Home (vv. 31-32)

(1) Come to Yourself—The first word the father says in his response to all these accusations and things is what? “And he said to him, ‘Son . . .’” (v. 31). He’s inviting his boy to come to himself. “You’re not a slave. And I’m not your master. What’s happened here? You’re my son. I’m your dad. And I love you.”

(2) Own Your Sin—“I’ve traded you for your stuff and, in so doing, I’ve lost both. If I loved you, if I valued you above all your stuff, well then I’d have all the stuff that I need—because you’d be caring for me like a good dad.”

(3) Acknowledge Your Place—“You are more like the prodigal than you were first willing to admit. You both have left me in your own ways. You’re not something separate. You are related. You are both cut from the same cloth. You’re in just as much need of my grace as ‘this your brother’ is.”

(4) Enter Freely In—At a fundamental level, God doesn’t need your service, you need His (Mark 10:45). And you cannot become a Christian, you cannot come home to God, you cannot find deep and lasting fulfillment, unless you first let Jesus (the “third Son” here standing outside this parable) come and serve you.

Reflection Questions



- Stop and think. Why are you at church this morning? Why did you come? I mean really. Is it to pay your dues, to check a box, to do something for God so that you can hopefully get Him to do something for you? Or is it because you love Him? Is it because you’ve seen the extent to which He’s gone to love you in Christ and you simply want to be near Him, to hear from Him, to worship and adore Him, to relate to Him as a child to a Father? If you’ve lost this motivation of love, how do you get it back?