

In A Far Country

Lesson Text: Luke 15:11-24

INTRODUCTION:

A. Luke 15:11-24

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.

12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. So he divided to them his livelihood.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.

20 And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

21 And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

23 And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;

24 for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

And they began to be merry. "

B. This story is widely known to Bible readers as the story of the prodigal son.

1. Jesus related this parable in the manner presented in Luke's account because the Jewish leaders were not showing concern over leading people to God.

2. Representations are made in the text.

a. The father represents God.

b. The elder brother represents the Jewish leaders.

- c. The younger brother (prodigal son) represents Israel.
- d. Our Lord effectively used parables to communicate Heaven’s truths.
- 4. In the setting of this story we are made aware that the Scribes and Pharisees were enraged that Christ would dare eat with sinners, something that they themselves would dare not do.
- 5. Jesus used this parable to say to them indirectly what He would later say directly — The Son of Man came to seek and save sinners.
- C. Someone has suggested that If Jesus had found the Scribes and Pharisees diligently and to God, He would have made the story of the prodigal son even more beautiful. Perhaps He would have told part of the story like this:

One day that elder brother came in and asked the father and mother to sit down with him in the living room, for he had something important to discuss with them. When they were comfortably seated, he said, ‘Mother, I heard you sobbing late into the night. I know you’re miserable because my younger brother is way out yonder somewhere, and we don’t know where he is. The other night I came in sort of late, and I noticed a light in my brother’s room. I drove the spurs into my horse as I turned into the gate, and I flew up to his room. I thought he was home. I was just going to hug him and tell him I was glad that he was back, for life has been terrible here without him. I sat down on his bed and cried to myself for half an hour. Mother, how long have you been keeping a light burning in his room?’

Then he turned to his father, ‘Dad, I saw you the other day. You and I don’t talk about him much, but I saw you when you climbed up that highest hill out there where you could see down that road, watching for him. I plowed on in the field, but the tears plowed some furrows down the dust of my cheeks. I washed my face before I came into supper. Now, let’s face it, we’re miserable; all of us him and bring him back home.’

The mother said, ‘No, no, no, you can’t go. We’ve lost one boy, and we can’t possibly spare you.’ His dad reached over and patted his shoulder and said, ‘Son, you’re a noble boy, but we can’t let you go.’ And then the boy got up and walked around, ‘Look, it’s just like a funeral here all the time. I miss him just as much as you do. I put on a laugh and a brazen front and joke some, but I’m crying inside. I’ve got to go and find my brother.’ The next morning he started on his search. The father and mother walked with him a long way and watched him as long as they could see him. Two boys coming up that winding dusty road. He couldn’t get down there fast enough. He called to the servants as he ran past the house, ‘Bring a robe, bring some sandals, bring a ring.’ And I’m sure he went to that youngest son first and smothered his repentant talk against his shoulder and put the robe on him. Then with quiet respect, he turned to that older son, reached out and took hold of his shoulders and whispered, ‘All that I have is yours, forever and ever. You’re the grandest son I ever knew.’ father, I told my brother if he

would come home, we’d just forget about that other division of the property, and we would be just the same two brothers we always were.

The elderly father said to the servants, ‘Go kill not just one of the fatted calves, but go kill two of them. Call the neighbors together. The seat of honor at the table belongs to the elder son tonight. He is the hero of this occasion.

- D. Listening friends, you and I both know that the story was not told in this manner in Luke 15 nor anywhere else for that matter, nor was it told with this implication or meaning.

WHAT IS THE “FAR COUNTRY?”

A. What is the far country?

1. Dr. Ellis Fuller says, “**It is anywhere that a man tries to live without God.**”
2. Augustine said it is “**forgetfulness of God.**”
3. Paul described it as being “**alienated from the life of God.**”

B. The description of the far country in the story of the prodigal son may deceive us into thinking that the far country is a long way from where we are, but in truth it is a long way from where God is. That far country can be right here in

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1. Many have thought it to be some far off city whose streets were dotted with taverns, gambling casinos and houses of ill-repute.
 2. Many have thought it to be a country filled with the scum of the earth where all the Sodoms, Gomorrah, and Babylons are all rolled into one.
 3. We must come to realize that a man can be in a far country living in a house on the same Street or road you live on.
 4. Even some sitting in this building this very moment may be living in that far country.

WHY DO PEOPLE GO TO THE FAR COUNTRY?

A. BECAUSE OF THE DESIRE FOR FREEDOM.

1. The prodigal son definitely wanted to be free of his father and mother and of the responsibilities of the farm. He sought for an elusive freedom in that far country. Instead of finding the freedom he sought, he soon discovered that the elusive freedom of the far country is the worst kind of slavery.
2. People today leave God and journey into the far country seeking an elusive freedom.
 - a. They feel they can enjoy themselves more at places other than a house of worship.

- b. They feel they can enjoy themselves in doing for themselves rather than in helping others.
 - c. They feel their money is better spent when it is spent on themselves rather than on the Lord’s work.
 - d. They feel their talents and abilities are more adequately appropriated when used for their own gain rather than in the cause of Christ.
3. However . . .
- When they are wretched;
 - When they are broke;
 - When they are miserable;
 - When they are lonely;
 - When they are feeling guilty;
 - When they are feeling ashamed;
 - When they are desiring to know the feeling of self-respect again;
 - When they desire to be among good people . . . God’s people . . . realizing the evasiveness of the slavery type of freedom they have sought . . . Then many begin to return and seek God.
4. Christianity offers you freedom . . . TRUE FREEDOM.
- a. Not a deceptive freedom that promises everything and delivers nothing.
 - b. Not an elusive freedom.
 - c. Not a false kind of freedom.
5. Christianity offers you the only place where true freedom can be found.
- a. **John 8:32** – “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
 - b. **John 8:36** – “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”
 - c. **Galatians 5:1** – “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”
 - d. **James 1:25** – “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”
 - e. **1 Peter 2:16** – “As free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.”
6. In these five verses, real freedom is referred to some ten times.
- a. “Free” — 5 times.
 - b. “Liberty” — 3 times.
 - c. “Truth” — 2 times.
7. The prodigal son did not have that in the far country. The prodigal son did not have that away from God . . . and neither will any of us.
- a. He started with much — He ended with nothing.
 - b. He started as a ruler — He ended as a servant (slave)

- c. He started with joy — He ended with sorrow.
 - d. He started with determination — He ended with defeat.
 - e. He started at the top — He ended at the bottom.
 - f. He started with himself — He ended without God.
8. Hear Jesus again in **John 8:36** – “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

B. BECAUSE OF THE POWER OF SIN.

1. In worship we sing, “There is power in the blood.” This is true. But there is also a power in sin. Not the righteous power that is in the blood of Christ, but an evil power from the devil himself.
2. Sin has a drawing power.
 - a. Just as God has a drawing power to make men free in Jesus Christ through the Gospel, the devil has a drawing power to make people slaves to sin and to cause them to be his servants and to be lost.
 - b. Permit me to ask...
 1. Which power is at work in your life?
 2. Which power has control of your every day?
 3. Which power have you yielded to?
 - c. The apostle Peter spoke of the attraction of sins repented of when he wrote in **2 Peter 2:20-22** – “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.

22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”
 - d. The pleasures of sin attract men to it.

Hebrews 11:25 – “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.”

 1. Any pleasure sin may bring is, at best, temporary as indicated in:
 - a. The resolve of Moses.
 - b. The story of the Prodigal Son.
 2. In the story of the Prodigal Son, soon the pleasures were gone and what did he have left? He stood miserably alone in the far country away from God.
 - a. **Psalm 52:3** – “You love evil more than good . . .”
 - b. **Jeremiah 14:10** – “Thus says the LORD to this people: “Thus they have loved to wander; They have not restrained their feet.

Therefore the LORD does not accept them; He will remember their iniquity now, And punish their sins.”

3. Yes, sin has a drawing power . . . and sin has its pleasures . . . but sin also has the power to destroy your soul, and this is what the Son of God came to tell us.
 - a. Have you not seen the evidence of this?
 1. Have you seen the heavy drinker die with cirrhosis of the liver?
 2. Have you see the adulterer or adulteress shot and killed by their spouse because of unfaithfulness?
 3. Have you seen the drug addict die from an overdose?
 4. While these are physical destructions, more important than this is the fact that sin destroys eternally the soul of the sinner.
 5. The prodigal son was in a state of destruction (Self-destruction) when he came to himself.
4. Sin has the power to draw men to it, then the power to destroy them when they are in its grasps. Listening friends . . . Stay away from sin!

C. BECAUSE OF THE LOVE OF MONEY.

1. What was the one thing that drew Judas Iscariot out of the apostleship? He loved money more than he loved his Lord.
 - a. The price was not too high at that—30 pieces of silver (approximately \$17.50 in U.S. currency.)
 - b. It illustrates the principle that it doesn’t take much to get some people to leave God.
 - c. Judas was not the first, nor shall he be the last, that the love of money has caused to leave the kingdom of heaven to go into that far country.
2. Adel Jarjoura and the Evon Shokra family in Nazareth in 1971. Mr. Shokra: “Money has destroyed my faith and ruined my life.”
3. **1 Timothy 6:9-10** – “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”
4. Don’t let money and material things take you away from God.

D. BECAUSE BRETHREN LET THEM.

1. Nothing is said about the elder brother making any attempt to stop the younger from going into the far country . . . Then he made no attempt to bring him back.

2. Cain once asked God this question: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” **Genesis 4:9**
 - a. Much to his surprise God’s answer was ‘yes,’ he was his brother’s keeper.
 - b. Instead of keeping his brother, he had murdered him.
 - c. We are more than keepers. . . we are brothers’
3. Many of our brethren have journeyed into that far country away from God.
 - a. They are there because we let them go.
 - b. They remain there because we have not brought them back.
4. Like Cain, we, too, are our brother’s keeper.
 - a. We have not murdered our brother, as did Cain.
 - b. We just let him wander into a far country away from God.
5. Brethren, let’s bring them back to the fold of safety . . . To faithfulness.
6. **Ezekiel 3:18-21** – “When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

19 Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

20 "Again, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die; because you did not give him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; but his blood I will require at your hand.

21 Nevertheless if you warn the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; also you will have delivered your soul."

HOW DO MEN GET BACK FROM THAT FAR COUNTRY?

- A. Is there any way for a man to get back from that far country? There is a great deal of truth to the Chinese proverb, “There is no road back.”
 1. That is true for some because they will not seek it.
 2. That is true for some because they will not take it.
- B. **Illustration:** A sports writer for a New York newspaper was deeply impressed by this truth one day as he watched a baseball game. Let me share what he wrote. In typical sports jargon, he said, “Lou Gehrig came to bat with two out in the ninth. The winning runs were on second and third. New York was one run behind, and a hit meant a win. The count on Lou Gehrig went to three balls and two strikes. The grandstand was in an uproar. The pitcher wound up deliberately and the third strike came smoking in straight across the middle

of the plate and the umpire called ‘strike three,’ for Lou Gehrig had not moved his bat. Very slowly Lou turned and spoke to the umpire. At this point the crowd went wild, for no one had ever heard Lou Gehrig with an umpire. We reporters all piled over the seats and right onto the field. We swarmed around the umpire. ‘What did Lou Gehrig say to you?’ We all asked in one breath. ‘Whatever it was, it would make headlines on the sports page.’

The umpire smiled and yelled to Lou Gehrig to come over. ‘Lou,’ he said, ‘Tell the boys what you said to me when I called that third strike on you.’ Lou looked a little bewildered as he answered, ‘Mister ump, I only said I would give ten dollars to have that one back.’”

The reporter was so impressed that when he wrote up the story, he added, “There are people all over the world who would give ten dollars or ten thousand dollars to get just one minute back for the privilege of changing something they said or did in that minute. But there is no road back.”

- C. Friends, I am here to tell you that there is a way back, and the prodigal son found it. The only way back for the wayward brother is the Biblical way through repentance and confession to God of one’s sins.
1. **Acts 8:22** – “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.” **That’s what it says!**
 2. **1 John 1:9** – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” **That’s what it says!**
 3. The prodigal son found the way back, but he did not go back just like he went out.
 - a. You are never the same after sin. It ravages our lives.
 - b. Sin will always:
 1. Take you farther than you wanted to go.
 2. Keep you longer than you wanted to stay.
 3. Cost you more than you were willing to pay.
 - c. God can blot out the yesterdays from His book of remembrance, and we can have a clean page and a new start in life.
 - d. This is one of the beautiful promises that are to be found in Christ Jesus. There is a way back—and it is through Christ.
- D. Every time a person goes into that far country, he takes God’s possessions with him to squander in sin.
1. According to ancient Jewish law of inheritance, if there were but two sons, the elder son would receive two-thirds of all the moveable property, and the youngest son the remaining one-third. (Deuteronomy 21)

2. This prodigal son wasted his substance in riotous living in a far country, away from his father who had given the portion to him. “Substance” — that one-third.
3. When we leave God and enter a far country, we take with us all the possessions, talents, abilities, and time that God has blessed us with . . . and then waste them in the practice of sin and disobedience.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Many brethren have gone into that far country at one time or another.
 1. Think about it!
 - a. Judas left _____ (Matthew 26)
 - b. Demas left _____ (2 Timothy 4:10)
 - c. Ananias & Sapphira left — (Acts 5)
 - d. Simon left _____ (Acts 8)
 - e. Have you left?
 2. May we ever serve with our Lord in seeking to save the lost.
- B. In Luke 15, three parables are presented.
 1. In verses 4-7 one of 1 00 sheep is wandering.
 2. In verses 8-1 0 one of ten silver coins is lost.
 3. In verses 11 -24 one of two boys is in the far country.
- C. Nineteen times in the Bible we find the expression, “I have sinned.”
 1. 16 in the Old Testament and 3 in the New Testament.
 2. In **Luke 15:21**, the prodigal son said, “**I have sinned.**”
 3. Notice what else he said: “I have sinned
 - a. “I have sinned against heaven
 - All sin is against God.
 - b. “I have sinned.., in thy sight.
 - Sin affects those we love.
 - c. I “am no more worthy to be called thy son.”
 - Sin makes us unworthy.
- D. Do you remember the story I told earlier? “One day that father, sitting on the same hill, saw two boys coming up that dusty road. He couldn’t get down there fast enough.”
 1. Those of you who are in the far country, don’t you see God sitting up there on the hill of life watching for you to come walking down these aisle, the road to repentance?
 - a. He has been watching for a long time.
 - b. God wants you and I believe you want God or else you would not be here in this service.
 2. Leave that far country now and bring back to God all that you have left. . . all that you have not thrown away to sin and in sin.
 3. Christ can mend a broken life if you will only bring Him . . . ALL the pieces.

E. Four cries of the prodigal son.

1. v. 12 — “Give me!”

2. v. 14 — “Help me!”

3. v. 19 — “Make me!”

4. v. 22 — “Accept me!”

F. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation.**

G. He waits for you now . . . This very moment!