

Lessons Learned From the Far Country

Luke 15:11-24

INTRODUCTION:

A. Lesson Text: **Luke 15:11-24**

B. Luke 15 has been called “the gospel within the gospel.”

1. It is a down-to-earth story that happens every day. Good people . . . honest people . . . Christian people go astray.
 - a. Some are like the sheep . . . wandered off on their own.
 - b. Some are like the coin . . . lost through neglect.
 - c. Some are like the prodigal son . . . deliberately left
 - d. Some are like the elder brother . . . Jealous, unconcerned, and angry.
2. Listening friends, we are the principle characters in these three parables.
 - a. This is our story.
 - b. Prodigals are everywhere.
 - c. Many here today have played the part of the prodigal sometime during their lives.
 - d. Many have prodigals among their family members.
 - e. We have prodigals in the church.
 - f. We have prodigals in this congregation.
 - g. The Bible is filled with prodigals.
 1. Cain was a prodigal.
 2. David was a prodigal.
 3. Moses was a prodigal.
 4. Jonah was a prodigal.
 5. Peter was a prodigal.
 - h. The gospel is for prodigals. Through it god is calling prodigals home.
 - i. Jesus came to save sinners, among which are prodigals.
 - j. God’s grace is for prodigals
 1. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I am found,
Was blind but now I see.
 2. Friends, there is a sense in which “Amazing Grace” is truly a prodigal song.
 - k. You see, we are either saved and safe at home in the Father’s house, or we are lost.
 1. There are no other options.
 2. There exists no in-between state.
 3. Saved . . . or lost.

4. If you are lost, let this sermon, this service, this invitation song be the time you come to Christ.
5. If you are astray, a prodigal in every way, let this sermon, this service, this invitation song be the time you come to Christ.

C. Listening Friends, I want to apply this lesson in two ways:

1. If we know someone who is lost or astray (and we all do), let us see if there is something in this lesson that will help us to understand them and help us to bring them to Christ . . . bring them home.
2. Let us make application of the lesson to our own lives so that perhaps we can avoid our own trip into the far country.

D. What is the far country? A far country is anywhere an man tries to live without God.

E. From our lesson text, we can learn much about sin:

1. Sin will take a man farther than he wanted to go.
2. Sin will keep him longer than he wanted to stay.
3. Sin will cost him more than he wanted to pay

SIN, ALL SIN, HAS ITS BEGINNING IN THE HEART.

A. Most prodigals are prodigals in heart before they are prodigals in the far country.

1. What kind of person are we when we are alone?
2. What kind of person would we be if we were in a far country where no one knew us?
3. The answer to both of those questions depends on what is in our heart?

B. The sins of the young prodigal in our text started long before he left home.

1. We sin in thought before we SIN in ACTION.

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|-------------|----------------------|
| a. We dream | d. We scheme |
| b. We think | e. We fanaticize |
| c. We plan | f. Then . . . We act |

2. The Bible tells us this is true.

- a. **James 1:14** - “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”
- b. Jesus said in **Matthew 15:18-20** - “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man . . .”
- c. Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 23:7** - “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”
- d. In **Philippians 4:8**, Paul tells us to think about good things. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are **TRUE**, whatever things are **NOBLE**, whatever things are **JUST**, whatever things are **PURE**, whatever things

are **LOVELY**, whatever things are of **GOOD REPORT**, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things.”

C. The bottom line is this: If we want to stay out of sin’s far country . . . if we want to stay safe and saved at home in the Father’s house . . .

1. Stop sin in the HEART.
2. Stop sin in the MIND.
3. Stop sin in the THOUGHTS.

SIN STARTS WITH A SELFISH “GIVE ME” ATTITUDE.

A. **Luke 15:12** - “And the young man said to his father, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.” So he divided to them his livelihood.”

1. Selfishness is a foundation upon which sin builds.
 - a. **1 Timothy 6:10** - “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.”
 - b. People allow things to get in the way of their relationship with and service to God.
2. Selfishness is well documented in history.
 - a. It is said that napoleon never saw a throne he did not want to sit on.
 - b. Alexander the Great cried because there were no more world for him to conquer . . . He had conquered them all, but all wasn’t enough.
 - c. The mother of James and John had a request to make of Jesus when she came and knelt down before him in **Matthew 20:20-21** - “And He said to her, ‘What do you wish?’ She said to Him, ‘Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom.’”
3. Are you a “give me, give me, give me” type of person?
4. Do you own things, or do things own you?
5. Do you possess possession, or do possessions possess you?
6. Are you more concerned with “things” than you are with people?
7. Are the things you possess more important to you than the people who care about you?

B. What substances do we have that can be wasted?

1. We have TIME.
 - a. 168 hours each week.
 - b. If you slept 8 hour a night, and I know some of you don’t or you wouldn’t be asleep now, you still have 112 hours of awakened time each week.
 - c. Some time is squandered.
 - d. Bro. Henley in Nazareth, Israel (2001, age 77 or 78) “I have little time left and none to waste.”
2. We have TALENT.
3. We have ENERGY.

4. We have MONEY.

SIN IS A VIOLATION OF CONSCIENCE.

- A. The prodigal son violated his religious conviction in the far country.
1. How do we know that? He was a Jew working in a gentile pig pen.
 2. Friends, Satan is asking you to compromise your convictions.
 - a. He is asking you to violate 1 John 3:15 and love the world.
 - b. He is asking you to violate Romans 12:2 and conform to the world.
 3. Friends:
 - a. Don't conform to this world.
 - b. Don't let this world squeeze you into its mold.
 - c. Don't violate your Christian convictions.
 - d. Do what is right.
- B. Who or what determines how we act?
1. Are we motivated by internal convictions or by external circumstances.
 2. Are we motivated by God's word or by the ways of the world?
 3. Are we motivated by our Father, God, or by our enemy, Satan?
- C. **1 John 2:15-17** - "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 1
 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.
 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

SIN CAN BE FORGIVEN.

- A. We don't know all that the prodigal son did in the far country . . . but he did a lot.
1. This one thing I do know: the blood of Jesus Christ is powerful enough to cleanse all his sins . . .and mine . . . and yours.
 2. **Isaiah 1:18** - "Come now, and let us reason together, Says the LORD, Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."
 3. The prophet Isaiah said in **Isaiah 59:2** - "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear."
 - a. God has always wanted man to be close to him.
 - b. In the beginning he placed man in a garden so he would be close, but Satan intervened.
 4. To Enoch, being close to God meant walking and talking with Him.
 - a. Amos asked in **Amos 3:3** - "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? "
 - b. Are you walking with God? Are you talking to with God?

5. To Abraham, being close to God meant obedience.
 - a. It meant going where God wanted him to go.
 - b. It meant living close to God and His will for his life.
6. To Jacob, it meant leaving his cheating live and taking on a new nature.
7. To Paul, it meant carrying the marks of Jesus in his body and not being ashamed of it.
 - a. **Galatians 6:17** - “. . . For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”
 - b. **Galatians 2:20** - “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

B. Yes, friends, sin really can be forgiven.

CONCLUSION:

- A. We have noted six things about sin as lessons from the far country
 1. Sins, and all sin, has its beginning in the heart.
 2. Sin starts with a selfish “Give me” attitude.
 3. Sin is always in a hurry.
 4. Sin is a waste of life.
 5. Sin is a violation of conscience.
 6. Sin can be forgiven.
- B. We have also noted this about sin:
 1. Sin will take a man farther than he wanted to go.
 2. Sin will keep him longer than he wanted to stay.
 3. Sin will cost him more than he wanted to pay
- C. Friends:
 1. If you are contemplating journeying to the far country . . . don’t!
 2. If you are on your way to the far country . . . stop and turn around.
 3. If you are in the far country. . . leave it immediately and come home.
- D. One of the most important lessons we have observed is this: **SIN CAN BE FORGIVEN!**
 1. **2 Peter 3:9** - “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance..”
 2. **Matthew 11:28** - “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
- E. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**