

Tommy Meador / General

The Gospel of Luke / Luke 15:1–32

Introduction

- <https://www.foxnews.com/us/florida-man-arrested-flaunting-stolen-mercedes-online-rash-car-break-ins> How dumb can you be? Think of a story like that and think, “What a waste of a life...”
- But... some of us in this room look back on our lives and we see waste. Wasted lives on bad relationships. Bad decisions. Selfish pursuits.
- If you feel like you’ve wasted your life, this story is for you. Simple truth: No life is a wasted life if you turn to God by faith.
- Looking at perhaps most famous story in Bible - even if you’ve never read the Bible, you’re probably familiar with this story.
- If you feel like you have wasted your life, two truths from this passage that will encourage you:

God loves you even if you have lived an outwardly wasteful life.

- Jesus’ teaching drew a crowd of people, tax collectors and sinners, who from the perspective of the Pharisees had wasted their lives.
- If Jesus was the Messiah, why spend time with people who had wasted their lives on sin? Why not spend time with those who had spent their living out the commands of God? Pharisees don’t understand.

- **Two parables:** Man has 100 sheep, loses one - he goes after it. Finds it, rejoices!
- Woman has ten coins - loses one - searches house - rejoices over found coin!
- Jesus came to find the lost - and heaven rejoices when the lost has been found.
- The point: There is much rejoicing when what is lost is found. Jesus came to save the lost sheep of Israel - sinners like the tax collectors and other sinners - much rejoicing in heaven over those that were being found. ([Lk. 14](#) - blind, maimed, lame, etc.)
- A third story - directed at the self-righteous Pharisees. "A man had **two sons.**" Think of this story in two acts.
- [Act 1](#): Younger son demands his share of his inheritance. (Younger son received 1/3 of inheritance).
- You don't receive inheritance until your father is dead! Son essentially saying to father, "I wish you were dead. **I have no interest in a relationship with you. I just want your stuff.**"
- Every person in the crowd enraged as they heard the story. Honor/shame culture - If you treated your father that way - cut off from the family. Father should treat such a rebel as if he was dead.
- In ancient culture, wealth tied up in land - so father sold off 1/3 of property and gave it to his youngest son.
- Went to a far away country - **as far from father as he could get** - a land of opportunity - freedom to sin away from the father's presence.
- He lives wastefully - going after every pleasure imaginable - but not long until he spent everything.
- Famine came to the land - no choice to hire himself out - got a job feeding pigs. Broke - just wants to eat pig food.

- **This is where Jesus should have ended the story.** Tax collectors and sinners would have hung their heads in shame - they knew from experience that you get what you deserve. They knew they were like this wasteful son. Pharisees would have held their heads up in pride - Maybe a pharisee shouted “Amen!” Served the boy right to be broke and hungry after treating his father like he did.
- But, story doesn’t end in the pig pen, and no one in the audience expected the turn in the story that Jesus was about to tell.
- **Boy come to senses** - “I’ll go home confess my sin - maybe my father will hire me as a servant.” No expectation of being anything more than a servant, but at least he would eat again. Note: boy is going to try to earn his way back into the family... be a servant, pay off the debt, etc.
- The shocking part of the story: the father is waiting - sleepless nights. Where was his son? Was he alive? Praying for this day - sees son in distance and runs to son - ancient culture - a father running to his son would have been seen as undignified. Dignified men don’t run after people.
- Son begins to confess - Has a speech to give, but father cuts him off - brings best robe (father’s own robe), a ring - position and authority - sandals - a luxury. Fattened calf - probably saving for a wedding feast. Let us celebrate!
- vs. 21 - This is what repentance looks like! It’s not trying to earn your way back into God’s favor but recognizing your sinfulness and unworthiness and confessing it to God!
- Not celebrating a wasted life but that what was lost had been found. Celebrate that the son came to his senses.
- **If you were a tax collector or sinner in audience - hope! “Could God love me that way?” If you were a Pharisee, “Say what? What kind of father would do this? Is he out of his mind?”**

- That's the point - Our heavenly Father's love is so amazing - it seems as if He is out of His mind to love people who have treated Him so badly - Tim Keller - God is a Prodigal God - That He would love people like us seems like such a waste.
- But - this is good news - **God loves you even if you have lived an outwardly wasteful life.**
 - Outwardly - everyone knows it. There's no hiding it. You've wasted your time - your resources - opportunities. Maybe everyone has turned on you because of wastefulness, but not God.
- Note - if you have lived wastefully, come home to your heavenly Father because in a relationship with the heavenly Father there is:
 - **No shame to feel** - Father doesn't shame son - He embraces. Jesus has endured your shame for you.
 - **No punishment to suffer** - Instead a feast! Jesus has been punished for you.
 - **No debt for you to repay** - Doesn't ask son to pay back - father absorbs the cost. Jesus has paid the price for you.
- If you have lived your life wastefully, Good News - Heavenly Father desires to lavish you with love and grace if you will come to your senses and come home to Him. You've been lost, but now you can be found!

God loves you even if you have lived an inwardly wasteful life.

- [Act 2](#) - Another brother. "**A man had two sons...**"
- Imagine, as Jesus told about the younger brother, His eyes fixed on the tax collectors and sinners in the crowd - they could know the love of

God. Now, as He talks about the older brother, His eyes are fixed on the Pharisees. Even though they were extremely religious, they were extremely ignorant of the love of God.

- The older brother was a description of them! And, while the younger brother had been wasteful, the older brother was just as wasteful. **He lived an inwardly wasteful life.**
- Vs. 25 - Older brother in the field - comes home after a long day of labor, hears the music - and ask what was going on. Not like his father - he wasn't waiting for his brother's return - just kept on with his responsibilities as if nothing had happened.
- Servant: Come to party **but elder brother refuses.** (Remember [Lk. 14](#) and parable of the feast?) The father comes out and the older brother reveals his heart. Pay attention to what he says - because some of you are older brothers. You've lived an inwardly wasteful life - on the outside you look like you have your act together. You are faithful to attend church. You live a moral life - never cheated on your spouse or your taxes. You don't cuss or drink. You have a good reputation in the community - but inwardly - you've wasted your life because your heart is cold to God's mission to seek and save the lost. **You can't rejoice in the Lord's work because:**
 - **You've wasted your life on self-righteousness.** "Look how many years I have served. I have never disobeyed your command..." Be honest - you put yourself on a pedestal and look down on others. Self-righteousness = I'm better than others. You forget - "None righteous, no not one." ([Romans 3:10](#)) You are nowhere as good as you think you are. If you are self-righteous, your sin is pride.
 - **You've wasted your life on keeping score.** Older brother quick to point out sins: "He devoured your property with prostitutes." Instead of comparing yourself to God's standard, you compare yourself to others. Do you gossip about the failures of others? Do you delight

when you see someone fail because it proves that you really are better? “Look at me. Look at you. I’m better. I obviously deserve good things, and you deserve whatever you have coming to you.” And when those who aren’t as good as we are receive grace or what they don’t deserve - it infuriates us!

- **You’ve wasted your life on self-pity.** Elder brother, “Where’s my party? Where’s my fattened calf?” **I’ve been there - BSC - instead of rejoicing.** Father: “You’ve always had me, but you’ve ignored me.” For you, you’re wondering the same thing. After all, you’ve kept the rules. You’ve been a good person. When are you going to catch your break? **Elder brothers are self-centered, unloving, and hate grace.**
- Jesus’ point: the older brother no different than the younger. **Both have wasted their lives, and both wanted the blessings of the Father but not His love. The older brother needs repentance just as much as the younger brother does.**
- Maybe you’re the elder brother - you’ve cleaned yourself up on the outside, but a mess inside. You don’t want intimacy with God - just God’s stuff!
- An inwardly wasteful life is dangerous - you can fool yourself into thinking you are good with God, when you are just as lost as the person wasting his life in the pig pen.
- An inwardly wasteful life kills the mission of the church - instead of joining the Father:
 - We don’t want there kind here.
 - Shouldn’t we be taking care of our own?
- **Cliffhanger** - don’t know how story ends. Does the elder brother repent? Will you?

- If younger brother - run to the Father. **If elder brother - humble yourself! Followers of Jesus - be warned** - it is easy to forget grace and make your faith about what you have done.
- The elder brother was a prideful son and a hateful brother. The Gospel: **Jesus is the elder brother you need.** Have you ever thought about Christ as your brother?
- He knew the agony of His Father over His lost children. And our elder brother left the glory of His heavenly Father's home, and He came to seek and save that which was lost.
- Jesus came to bring us home - we had squandered away every gift the Father gave us. Jesus came to rescue us not by opening up His wallet to buy us out of our mess, but by giving His life. On the cross, Jesus was stripped naked and died in your place so you could receive His robe of righteousness. Jesus was willing to give up everything to bring you home.
- Younger brother - Christ has come from heaven to earth for you. Turn to Him.
- Elder brother - You won't stop until your heart is melted by what your true Elder Brother did for you.