

**Title:** Vile Sinners and the Merciful God

**Scripture:** Luke 15:11-24

**Series:** Topical

1. Introduction –

- a. Today’s passage grants us the opportunity to see both the vileness of sinners (humanity in general) and the merciful nature of God.
  - i. Our passage answers the questions, “To what extent is God merciful? How much is God willing to forgive?”
  - ii. As our world becomes increasingly more disobedient to God and His Word, we encounter men and women overburdened with vast amounts of sin. Men and women who do not believe that there is forgiveness for the evil they have committed.
  - iii. It is at this juncture that both sinner and saint must be reminded of the primary mission of Jesus Christ as declared in **1 Timothy 1:15** The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.
    1. The sinner’s salvation was the mission of Christ, and our parable demonstrates how God accomplishes this great work.
- b. Let us now study one of the most famous parables of Jesus Christ, The Parable of the Prodigal Son. It is my prayer that our Lord would illuminate our hearts to understand the very character of God.

2. Verse 11 – The Main Characters: And he said, “There was a man who had two sons.

- a. This portion of Scripture is exceptionally famous. Our story has three main characters; the oldest son, the youngest son, and their father. Much attention has been lent to the youngest son. Most of the parable deals with him, but we cannot forget that there are two sons and that both are spiritually dead men; although the vileness of the youngest is most evident to us, we must force ourselves to see the subtle sinfulness of the second.
  - i. Because our purpose is to deal with the forgiveness of God, we will focus predominantly on the youngest of the sons and say a few words at the end in regards to the oldest son.

3. Verses 12-13 – The Sinfulness of the Sinner – And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. (13) Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.
- a. In verses 12 and 13, we see a young man so bent on his own thinking that he breaks cultural norms and what is proper and decent. As the younger son, he would receive 1/3 of the inheritance upon his father’s death.
  - b. In verse 12, the youngest son reveals his hatred towards his father. He cannot wait for his father to die. He feels that he has waited long enough and makes a demand that the father would give him whatever inheritance he would receive upon the father’s death. The purpose of the request was to go live life on his terms away from his father’s guidance and regulations.
    - i. By making this request, we understand that this young man is guilty of breaking the commandments of God.
      - 1. He is an idolater, a Sabbath-breaker, a man that uses the name of the Lord in vain, a man that dishonors his parents, a murderer, thief, adulterer, liar, and covetous individual. He is a sinner through and through.
        - a. His very request makes him despicable to any fair hearer of this parable.
        - b. What we see in the description of this man is the shadowy reflection of humanity. Every man is a vile sinner in rebellion to the father above. All men are guilty of breaking God’s Law.
    - ii. We note the father’s unexpected actions. The father grants the young man’s request and frees him to pursue depravity.
      - 1. Why? Because we cannot be saved until we see ourselves in desperation over sin.
  - c. In verse 13, we notice that the young man proceeds to abandon his father, moving as far away from his presence as possible.
    - i. There he engages in such sin that is scandalous and contrary to what decency should dictate. He lives as a law-breaker.

1. Beloved, what does sinful living accomplish? We see that this type of living squanders the father's gifts. Licentious living bankrupts us.
  - ii. We must admit that it is quite possible that this young man enjoyed the fleeting pleasures of his sins and most probably was initially glad to be out from under his father's authority.
    1. His father's rules seemed archaic, restrictive, and unnecessary.
    2. The desire for sin blinded this man from seeing how much the father loved him and was trying to protect him. He could not see or didn't care about the pain he had caused the righteous heart of His Father.
      - a. All sinners are equally selfish and ungrateful. They see God's Law as restrictive instead of protective.
      - b. The desire for sin has blinded them to view the father harshly and criticize his loving care.
4. Verses 14-16 – Discipline Brings Consciousness of Sin – And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. (15) So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. (16) And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.
- a. Let us marvel at the continuously present and amazing love of God. Let us consider that this man is graciously brought to the lowest estate that he has ever experienced.
  - b. In Verse 14 – We see that God allows this young man to waste all of his resources, wealth, and gifts to such a point that this young man becomes bankrupt. This is the mercy of God. This young man would not consider his sinful estate unless something this dire had been permitted to touch him.
    - i. Notice that in his bankruptcy ...**he began to be in need.**
  - c. In Verse 15 – The careless man now finds himself doing work that he would never have considered in the past. He finds himself homeless.
  - d. In Verse 16 – This young's man desperation is such that now he desires to eat the muck and slop of pigs. How great is our father's mercy to you and me?

- i. The reason that your sin so wounds you is that God has permitted you to taste it completely. The divine response is the same for all sinners. Do you want to live in sin? Then experience all that sin brings!
  - ii. Only then will we understand.
  
- 5. Verse 17 – The Realization of Sin by the Sinner – “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’
  - a. We, with trembling hearts, acknowledge what the discipline of God accomplishes in this young man. He, according to the text, **comes to himself**. He is awakened to his deplorable condition. He is awakened to the thought that he has ruined his life by despising the father who loved him and cared for Him. He sees his actions and sins as loathsome and vile.
  - b. At the same time, he reconsidered the father. He remembers the father’s goodness toward his slaves and with what love he treated those that worked for him.
  - c. Finally, both his contempt for himself and remembering His Father’s love spur him to return to his father.
  
- 6. In Verses 18 and 20A – The Awakening of the Sinner – I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. (19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” (20A) And he arose and came to his father...
  - a. Notice the young man’s plan of action:
    - i. **I will arise and go to my father** – He determines to go to His father. He will make personal contact for he is the offender. He now realizes how distorted his view of the father had been. But now, he sees his father in a new light. His father’s rules and regulations were meant to keep him from the place that disobedience had now brought him to.
    - ii. **...and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you** – Notice that in order to seek forgiveness, there must be a total confession of the offense committed. There must be an acceptance of the seriousness of

the trespass. We cannot be saved until we are willing to confess our sinfulness.

- iii. **I am no longer worthy to be called your son** – He will admit that he has no claim by which God should grant him forgiveness for the sins committed. His sins speak about his lack of honor or worth. He has no claim to grace.
  - 1. Beloved, this is the state of every man, for all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.
- iv. **Treat me as one of your hired servants** – He does not plead for grace but asks instead for mercy.
  - 1. Please do not punish me for what my sins deserve.
  - 2. Every sinner must come to this realization. The sinner is unworthy to receive even the slightest mercy.
- v. **And he arose and came to his Father** – Having formulated his plan; he puts it into action. It is not enough to think right thoughts about repentance; there must be action. The sinner must come to God and, devoid of pride, beg for forgiveness.

7. Verse 20b – The Compassion of God toward Sinners – But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

- a. Here, oh wonder of wonders, we must pause and consider the compassionate heart of God toward sinners. When they turn from their sin (by His Spirit) and endeavor to come to him to confess, He immediately goes out to them and showers them with His compassion. The father in our parable runs to him and embraces that vile and dirty son. That son with so much sin and a sin-ravaged body is embraced, kissed, and held. Do you see it? Do you comprehend the magnitude of what is taught here?
  - i. If a sinner were to come to God willing to confess, the vile and worthless sinner will be forgiven.
    - 1. Why? **John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

8. Verse 21 – The Confession of the Sinner – And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’
- a. The son confesses entirely. What incredible beauty is found in confession? Confession is soul-cleansing power. It is a laying down of our pride and accepting the truth of who we are.
    - i. **Proverbs 28:13** Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.
9. Verses 22-24: The Grace of Forgiveness Given to Repentant Sinners: But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. (23) And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. (24) For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.
- a. The son dared not ask for grace, but rather, he had determined only to seek mercy.
  - b. But what is the father’s character? He is a gracious God. He would not accept the son back as a slave but instead restores all that has been destroyed by sin.
  - c. The sinner is restored and elevated to a position he could never have asked for; he is called a son. As a son, he receives the blessings of sonship:
    - i. The best robe given
    - ii. A ring given
    - iii. Shoes for homeless feet
    - iv. The fatted calf
    - v. A celebration
      1. What does this teach us about the joy that is present in heaven when one sinner repents? What does this say about the disposition of God toward sinners? What should our hearts learn from this father’s actions?
10. Closing:
- a. An appeal for the unrepentant
  - b. An appeal for the offending Christian

- c. An appeal for us to go into the world and present the gospel of forgiveness.
  - d. A few words on the second son.
11. Benediction –
- a. **Psalms 145:8** The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

**Public Reading of Scripture:**  
**Psalms 145**