

The title of this morning's sermon is, *When We Say, "Father Give Me My Share."*

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's gospel verse by verse and we find ourselves at **Luke 15:11**. Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word.

**Luke 15:11** And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. **12** 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. **14** 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.

You may be seated. Let's pray.

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In the last sermon we finished the second parable, the parable of the lost coin, and this morning we will begin looking at the third and final parable, the parable of the lost sons. A couple things to notice:

- The first parable deals with losing one out of 100, or 1%. The second parable deals with losing one out of 10, or 10%. The third parable deals with losing one out of two, or 50%. The percent is increasing.
- The value is also increasing. A son is worth more than a coin, and a coin is worth more than a sheep.

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Let me share a few other things about this parable before we begin...

According to my ESV Expository Commentary this parable *"is simply incomparable and is perhaps the greatest parable Jesus ever uttered, which would make it the greatest parable in history."*

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The first two parables primarily focus on God, but this parable focuses as much on man, and in particular his sin and rebellion.

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We believe in one God who eternally exists as three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

There are parables that primarily deal with the second Person of the triune nature of God, God the Son, such as the first two parables. The shepherd who goes to look for the lost sheep and the woman who goes to look for the lost coin represent Jesus as He goes to look for lost sinners. But this parable focuses on the first Person of the triune nature of God, God the Father.

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In other words, to be clear, the father in the parable represents God the Father.

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Also, the two themes of the first two parables are joy and repentance. The words joy, rejoicing, and repentance occur eight times.

Joy and repentance continue to be the themes of the third parable as well, but there is a significant change. The words joy, rejoice, rejoicing, and repentance are absent. Instead of using these words, we get to see them described:

- We get to see the son's repentance
- We get to see the father's joy

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Finally, the previous two parables were about unbelievers, but this parable focuses on a believer. This is so important I want to give you a lesson to keep it straight...

**Lesson One: The first two parables are about the salvation of unbelievers, but the third parable is about the repentance of a backslidden believer.**

In the first two parables the shepherd finds the lost sheep and the woman finds the lost coin, picturing the conversion of lost sinners. But in the third parable the father waits and watches eagerly for his son's return. Do you see the contrast between the shepherd and the woman pursuing in the first two parables but the father waiting and watching in the third parable?

The son is a son, which means he is saved. So, the first two parables are about the conversion of lost sinners, but the third parable is about the repentance of a backslidden believer.

And because the prodigal son represents a backslidden believer, I'm going to focus on application for believers.

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With all this in mind, please look with me at verse 11...

**Luke 15:11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons.**

Let's remember that the titles for parables are like the headings in our Bibles: they were added by man. I'm thankful for them, and they can be helpful, but I think the common title for this parable is misleading.

Most commonly this parable is called The Parable of the Prodigal Son, which puts the focus on one of the sons. But the parable is about three different people and all of them are mentioned in this verse: the father and his two sons. We should focus on each of them, and we will over the following weeks.

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Look at verse 12...

**Luke 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.'**

Now let me remind you of something...

Whatever Jesus's teaching meant to the listeners in His day, is what it means to us in our day. The way people understood Jesus's teaching when He preached it is the way we should understand it when we read it. We should always strive to understand what Jesus's listeners understood to have the correct understanding.

Now with that in mind, when Jesus said this, His listeners would have gasped, because this was an absolutely outrageous request from the younger son. And this brings us to lesson two...

**Lesson Two: The son's request was incredibly disrespectful and selfish.**

Look at the words **give me the share:**

- There is not an ounce of gratitude in his heart.
- He showed utter disrespect toward his father.
- He lacked any love for him whatsoever.

John MacArthur said, *"The truth of the matter is for a son to say that in the sensibilities of the ancient Middle East and village life would be tantamount to saying, 'Dad I wish you were dead. You are in the way of my plans. I want my freedom and I want out of this family now. I have other plans that don't involve you. They don't involve this family. They don't involve this village. I want nothing to do with any of you.'"*

Keep in mind Jesus is speaking to people whose culture is based on the 10 Commandments and the fifth commandment is honor your father and your mother. As Paul said in **Ephesians 6:2** this is the one commandment with a promise.

The fifth commandment had risen to the top of the list of social life. And so, the chain of respect was well known to everyone. The father was at the top, then the oldest brother, and THEN the next brother. This younger son wasn't even second!

It was completely shameful for the lowest in the family, the lowest in the line of honor, to act this way. In Jewish culture, his behavior would have been cause for the son to be removed from the family.

Another commentator said, *“There was no way that Jesus could portray greater shame upon a person than that act. In the social structure of Israel, that was the supreme act of shame.”*

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The son's request was so outrageous and disrespectful that to say something like this brought a complete end to the relationship.

The son was communicating that he wanted his father dead, and he was communicating that he wanted to be dead to his father. And this is why the father twice said that his son was dead:

- **24 For this MY SON WAS DEAD, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.**
- **32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this YOUR BROTHER WAS DEAD, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.”**

What did the father mean when he said his son was dead?

The son was clearly alive, so he didn't mean it literally. The father meant relationally the son was dead to him, because of his behavior at this moment.

It was even customary in that culture to hold an official ceremony, a funeral, to show the end of the relationship.

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A slap across the face was the typical Jewish gesture to show rebuke for such disrespect.

The listeners would expect the father to rebuke the son, slap him across the face, dismiss him from the family, and then hold a funeral.

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And let me help you understand, not just how disrespectful this request was, but how selfish it was...

As you have probably heard before, the firstborn received a double portion, or twice as much...

**Deuteronomy 21:17 [the Father] shall acknowledge the firstborn...by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the firstfruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his.**

The son asked for his share of his estate, which would have been half of what his older brother would receive, because the older son would receive two thirds of the inheritance and the younger son would receive one third.

But considering that we find out later that the family had servants and they were able to hire musicians and dancers for the party, they were very wealthy. In other words, the younger son still probably would have been able to receive a considerable amount even though he was not the oldest.

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Now let me tell you something interesting about what the son was and wasn't asking for...

Briefly look a couple chapters to the left at **Luke 12:13**.

**Luke 12:13 Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”**

The Greek word for **inheritance** is *klēronomia* (pronounced clay-ron-om-ee-uh). This is the normal word for inheritance that occurs throughout the New Testament, 14 times to be exact.

When you use this word to talk about an inheritance, you're talking about everything that comes with the inheritance, such as:

- The management of the inheritance
- The responsibility to care for the family
- The leadership involved with overseeing all of the rest of the family and the servants

You're in charge of the whole estate. You're talking about having to provide for and lead the rest of the family and all the servants. This is why the oldest son received a double portion, because he had to take care of everyone who was left after the father died.

To make it really simple, when a son received the inheritance from his father, he had to be willing to take his father's place.

Now turn back to **Luke 15**. When the son asked for his **share of the property**, or inheritance, the Greek word is *ousia* (pronounced oo-see-uh) and this is the only place it occurs in Scripture.

Jesus deliberately used a different word for inheritance that doesn't involve any responsibility or accountability, because the younger son didn't want any of that:

- He didn't want to care for the family.
- He didn't want to manage anything.
- He didn't want anyone asking him for anything.
- He didn't want any responsibility.

He wanted complete freedom and independence.

Basically, he said, "I just want my stuff. I want out of the family. I don't want anyone asking me for anything. I don't want to be responsible for anyone or anything. Just let me go live my life the way I want with no accountability."

And here's another interesting fact...

A son could never take possession of his inheritance until his father died, because in that culture the father was in charge as long as he lived. The father's authority could never be relinquished to his children even if he wanted that.

So even if a father told his sons, "This is all yours. It belongs to you." The father would still be responsible until he passed away.

The best a father could do is say, "I want you to learn responsibility, so I want you to start managing the property." But the father would still be involved. He would still keep a strong and firm hand, overseeing everything that was done, and with access to everything that was earned.

But we know the son wasn't even asking for this. He was asking to be given everything so that he could take off and enjoy it completely independently of his father.

In other words, the son's request could've been more reasonable if he was starting a family or a business or he wanted to learn responsibility. But he was motivated by foolishness. He wanted to waste the money on sinful living.

So of course, because the father knows what kind of young man his son is, and can guess that his son won't be using the money honorably, he is going to:

- Tell him no
- Rebuke him for his disrespect

- Remove him from the family
- Slap him across the face
- Announce that the son should be viewed as dead
- And then hold a funeral for him

Nope.

Shockingly we read...

**Luke 15:12b And he divided his property between them.**

Jesus's listeners would never believe that a father would respond this way and give his selfish, immature, rebellious son his inheritance. The people would be shocked at the son's request to be given the inheritance, but they would be even more shocked when Jesus said the father gave him the inheritance.

One commentator wrote, *"For a father to do this was very surprising and would cause another gasp. Rather than strike him across the face for his insolence, the father grants him what he wants."*

And you don't have to live in Jesus's day to know that a reasonable father wouldn't even do this in our day. What father, if he knew his son was just going to waste the money, would give him a bunch of money?

Nobody.

So, what is this really about? Why would Jesus preach something that is so outrageous and unbelievable? Why would he say something that he knew nobody would believe?

Recently I have been talking to you about Jesus's frequent use of hyperbole, or exaggeration. And this is one more example.

Jesus used hyperbole here for the same reason He always used hyperbole: to drive a point home. And this brings us to lesson three...

**Lesson Three (Part One) Our Heavenly Father might let us have our will to our own detriment.**

No reasonable earthly father in Jesus's day or in our day would do this, but this father doesn't represent any earthly father in Jesus's day or our day. He represents God the Father:

- The father in the parable is willing to experience rejection and betrayal, because He represents God the Father who is willing to experience rejection and betrayal.
- The father in the parable extends freedom that will be taken advantage of and used sinfully, because he represents God the Father who extends freedom to us that will be taken advantage of and used sinfully.
- The father in the parable gives the son what he wants – even to the son's detriment – because he represents God the Father who will give us what we want even to our detriment.

To make this very simple, the beginning of this parable represents God the Father giving the sinner freedom to sin.

Some people have a mistaken notion about God...

They think that if God doesn't want them doing something, that He will stop them. There are people who engage in sin and their defense is, "God hasn't stopped me, so He must be okay with it. He didn't close the door, so it must be okay that I walked through it."

But it doesn't work like this.

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Listen to this verse...

**James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.**

I think because of this verse, there's kind of this idea that God will never give us anything that's detrimental to us.

But...

There is one thing He will give us that is detrimental to us, and that is our will.

God hasn't created a bunch of robots. We are free moral agents able to make sinful decisions, such as rebelling against a loving father...which this parable illustrates.

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I told you in a recent sermon that we must consider the theology of parables by seeing if there is other Scripture that supports the conclusion we are considering. And there are other places in Scripture that also reveal God gives people their will even when it is to their own detriment.

For the rest of this sermon, and probably the next sermon, I would like to look at some examples of God giving people their will...to their own detriment.

Now to be clear, we are not looking at examples of people sinning. The Bible is filled with examples of that, and I don't need to convince you that people sin. I'm looking at examples of people pushing for something detrimental and God letting them have it. In other words, I want to look at examples of God letting people have their will when it was not in their best interest.

And why do I want to look at this?

Because I think it is very important to know that if we push God He might let us have what we want...even to our own detriment, or even when it is not in our best interest.

For the first example, we will look at Moses, and this brings us to the next part of lesson three...

**Lesson Three (Part One) Our Heavenly Father might let us have our will to our own detriment (Part Two) such as with Moses.**

Please turn to **Exodus 3**.

You might notice there's only one example. We'll look at the other examples in the next sermon.

Here's the background. God meets Moses at the burning bush and tells him to go to Egypt to tell Pharaoh to let the Israelites go.

But Moses makes five excuses. Let's quickly look at each of them and then see how God lets Moses have his will to his own detriment.

The first excuse is in **verse 11**...

**Exodus 3:11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"**

So, first Moses says that he is not good enough for the task.

Skip to verse 13...

**Exodus 3:13 Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”**

Now Moses says he doesn't know enough.

Skip to Exodus 4:1...

**Exodus 4:1 Then Moses answered, “But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, ‘The Lord did not appear to you.’”**

Third, Moses says they won't take him seriously.

Skip to verse 10...

**Exodus 4:10 But Moses said to the Lord, “Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.”**

Fourth, Moses says he doesn't speak well enough.

Look at **verse 13**...

**Exodus 4:13 But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.”**

Moses kept pushing God until finally at the height of his resistance he said, “Send someone else.” None of his excuses worked, so he resorted to flat out resisting going. At least he used the word **please**.

This didn't make God happy, and that's not my opinion. Look at **verse 14**...

**Exodus 4:14a Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses**

These words are so important. They are the key to interpreting this account correctly.

God is angry. When He's angry at people, He doesn't bless them. He disciplines them.

And one of the ways God disciplines us is giving us our will...even when it's to our detriment.

And that's what He does here. Look at the rest of the verse...

**Exodus 4:14b and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. 15 You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. 16 He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him. 17 And take in your hand this staff, with which you shall do the signs.”**

God told Moses to take his brother, Aaron, but this is not God being gracious or merciful. **Verse 14** says God was angry at Moses. This is God being judicial.

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Just think about it...

Do you really think God wanted Aaron to go with Moses, or do you think Aaron went with Moses because Moses kept pushing? You can tell it wasn't God's will for Aaron to go with Moses, because he didn't mention Aaron until Moses had been so defiant.

And here's another question: do you think Moses was happy later about the fact that he pushed God to the point that He let him bring his brother? How was it for Moses having his brother with him?

Remember the Golden Calf?

Listen to this verse...

**Numbers 12:1 Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. 2 And they said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" And the Lord heard it.**

I'm sure Moses spent a lot of years saying, "I really wish I hadn't pushed God. I really wish I had just obeyed when He asked me to go."

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Let me conclude with this...

We always want to have soft, teachable, receptive hearts that are submissive and sensitive to God's will. We never want to keep pushing for our will when God has already made His will clear.

In the privacy of our own hearts, let's ask ourselves if there's anything that's our will that isn't really God's will.

As I've been preaching this sermon:

- Is there anything the Lord is convicting you of?
- Is there an area in your life that the Bible has made clear God is against but you keep pushing for it?

The worst that can happen is not that God will keep saying no. The worst that can happen is He can finally let us have it even to our own detriment.

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I will be up front after service, and if you have any questions about anything I've shared, or I can pray for you in any way I would consider it a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.