

Luke 15:11-24

A TALE OF A WASTED LIFE

Intro: Today, we will consider one of the most famous parables ever uttered by the Lord Jesus. This passage, which contains three parables, as been labeled by some as *God's Lost and Found*. Each of these stories deals with lost things that are found by the owner.

Verses 1-2 of this chapter tell us what motivated Jesus to give the parables that make up these verses. The enemies of Jesus were criticizing Him because He received sinners. They are astounded that someone like Jesus Christ would spend His time with "*publicans and sinners.*" They are stunned that He would receive such wicked and evil people. In response, Jesus tells them four stories. Each of these stories are designed to teach the same great truth: "*Every soul is precious to God, even yours!*"

Today, we are going to look at the parable of *The Prodigal Son*. As Jesus moves through these stories, He is placing greater and greater emphasis upon the value of the thing lost. In the parable of *The Lost Sheep*, **v. 3-7**, there was 1 sheep out of 100 missing, or 1%. In the parable of *The Lost Silver*, **v. 8-10**, there was 1 coin out of 10 missing, or 10%. In the parable of *The Lost Son*, there is 1 son out of 2 missing, or 50 %. In the first 2 parables, the objects missing were animal and material. In this parable, the object missing is a human. Each time, the object lost grows in value and importance. Jesus is trying to tell us that "*Every soul is precious to God, even yours!*"

Now, many times preachers will use this parable to preach to backsliders. And, there is plenty of application available to use it in that way. The actual interpretation of this passage deals with lost things. The Lord is speaking about the salvation of lost souls and He is trying to impress upon all those who read this passage that ***“Every soul is precious to God, even yours!”***

With these introductory thoughts in mind, let’s turn our attention to the message contained in this parable. It may be that there are some here today who have never been saved. If so, let the Lord show you how precious you are to Him and come to Him for salvation.

It may be that some who are saved are not as close to the Lord as they need to be. I hope you learn the truth today that you can come home again.

Please let the Lord to speak to you today and heed His voice when He calls. Let’s look into this parable as I preach about ***A Tale Of A Wasted Life***. Notice three ***scenes*** that present themselves here.

I. V. 11-12 **SCENE 1: AN ASTONISHING REQUEST**

The request of this younger son was for his share of the inheritance. According to **Deut. 21:17**, he was entitled to one-third of his father’s estate. His request was legal, since a man could divide his estate while he lived, but it was cruel.

A. **This Request Was Shocking** - When this boy asked for his father to divide the estate, he was in effect saying, ***“I wish you were dead and no more say in my life! I am tired of you and I***

want to be free from you and your control in my life.” Few of us would ever say that to our parents!

The lost man lives his life with just that attitude! His life says to God, ***“I wish you were dead!”*** After all, he lives his life as if God was dead!

B. **It Was A Selfish Request** - Notice what this boy said to his father: ***“Give me!”*** His focus is on ***“me”***. His life is wrapped up within himself, and what he wants. He cares for no one else. In spite of his son’s insensitive request, the father is so gracious! He could have refused and kicked the son out, but he doesn’t. He merely does what his son demands and gives his son his inheritance. The Bible says, ***“And he divided unto them his living.”***

This father has poured his life into building his estate so that he might have something to pass down to his sons. This father gave his son the result and sum total of his life and work. ***The younger son wanted what the father could give him, but he did not want the father!***

In his attitude, he pictures the lost sinner! The lost person takes no thought for God. Their attitude toward God is ***“Give me!”*** They want His air, His food, His water, His time, His world, etc, but they do not want Him involved in their lives!

When God made man, He literally poured His life into man, **Gen. 2:7**. And, every day that men live upon the earth, they

consume the resources that God created for them, yet they do not acknowledge or want Him in their lives. They want what He can give them, but they do not want Him! What a tragedy! No wonder the Bible calls such men “**Fools,**” **Psa. 14:1.**

If you want to live your life like there is no God, He will allow to do just that! If you want to take all that He can give you without acknowledging Him, He will let you do that too. But, you need to know that end of life life will be an eternity in Hell! Is that what you want as the sum total of your life? Remember, **Pro. 16:25,** “***There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.***”

I. Scene 1: An Astonishing Request

II. V. 13-16 SCENE 2: AN AWFUL REALITY

The son gets just what he wants, but soon finds out that “***all that glitters is not gold!***”

A. V. 13 The Reality Of Sin’s Pleasures - He takes his father’s gracious provision and he squanders it by living a wicked, self-indulgent life. The words “***riotous living***” refer to “***a life totally given over to sinfulness and wickedness.***” When this boy left home, he also left behind all his moral restraints. He lived to gratify every whim and desire of the flesh!

Did he have a good time? Oh yes! I will not be so foolish as to try and tell you that there is not pleasure in sin, **Heb. 11:25.** The last phrase of that verse says that this pleasure is, “***for a season,***” Just as the trees outside this building are green and

full of promise today, they will soon be wilted and the leaves will die. The seasons of life change! And when they do, everything that brought you pleasure at one point in your life will bring you pain instead! A life lived in the bottle; a life lived indulging sexual sins; a life lived for fleshly pleasures; a life lived for self; all these end up in the same place! Yes, pleasure may be found in these things for a short time, but is eternity without God in Hell worth the short time spent in the pleasure of sins embrace?

B. V. 14 **The Reality Of Sin's Price** - Eventually his money ran out, and along with the money, his friends also ran out! The far country, a land of "**wine, women and song**," had become a land of "**weeping, worry and sorrow**." He found out too late that sin carries with it a high price tag!

1. **Sin Brings Separation** - This boy finds himself broke, alone and miles away from a father who had done nothing but love him. By his own actions, he finds himself separated from that father by a wide gulf of sin, pride and ignorance!

So it is with every soul that is lost in sin. They are separated from God, **Isa. 59:2**. He loves them, **Jer. 31:3; John 3:16**, but their sins stand between them and Him! What a waste and what a tragedy!

2. **Sin Brings Sorrow** - "**He began to be in want**" - Life had turned upside down for this boy. When the music stopped, the friends left, and the money was all gone, this young man found out that he had some needs that he could not meet.

His sin had robbed him of everything of value and it left him hopeless and helpless in the far country.

This is how sin treats all its victims! It will promise you the world, but it can only deliver hopelessness, desolation and death, **Rom. 6:23; James 1:14-15**. We say, ***“It pays to live for God!”*** And, it does! But, did you know that it also pays to live for the devil? It pays dividends that you cannot even imagine! Broken lives, ruined marriages, shattered dreams, damaged trust, health problems, hopelessness, depression, defeat and death are all part of the pay package of sin! Someone rightly has said, ***“Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay.”*** Don't worry, sin always pays off, **Gal. 6:7!**

C. V. 15-16 **The Reality Of Sins's Pain** - Because of his foolish decisions, this boy found himself in a mess. In that condition, he learned some valuable lessons!

1. **Sin Brings Shame** - Here is a Jewish boy who finds himself feeding the pigs! For a Jewish man to stoop to this level would mean that he had reached the very bottom of the barrel of life! He must have been filled with shame! Those who heard Jesus say this must have been shocked beyond belief!

Those who allow sin to have its way in their lives always come to shame sooner or later. III. The shame of a wasted life! The shame of a wasted youth. The shame of wasted opportunities. But, worst of all, there is the shame of a

wasted eternity! It is a disgrace to sacrifice your **finances**, your **fitness** and your **family** on the altar of sin and self-indulgence! What a shame to live that way and what a shame to die that way! It doesn't have to be! Sadly, many live like Hell and don't seem to be bothered by it at all! There will come a day, when they will be ashamed in His presence. ***“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming,” 1 John 2:28!***

2. **Sin Brings Suffering** - Here he is, **no home, no help** and **no hope**. No one cares for him at all. He is starving and would have taken the pigs food if he could have. He is suffering because of the choices he has made!

Sin has not changed! It always brings suffering, **Pro. 13:15!** Many suffer in this life because of the things they loose to sin, health, wealth, family, etc. But, those who allow sin to play itself out to its ultimate conclusion find that Hell is all they have to look forward to at the end of the way! Friend, don't let that happen to you!

3. **Sin Brings Sorrow** - No one around him cares whether he lives or dies! He is alone and lonely. He is hungry and broken. What a sad shape to be in, but for this young man, it was the first step in getting him home.

Nothing is any more sad than a life broken by sin. Nothing cuts the heart as deep as seeing a life that was once filled

with potential, dashed to pieces on the cruel rocks of wicked living. It doesn't have to happen, but you might as well know today, you will not go into the far country and come back happy! No one ever wandered off into sin and came back glad they did. They all returned broken, defeated and humbled, **III. David and Samson**. If that is what it takes to get you started toward home, the praise the Lord!

I. Scene 1: An Astonishing Requests

II. Scene 2: An Awful Reality

III. V. 17-20a SCENE 3: AN ALTERED RETURN

The Prodigal Son did not come home the same way he left. When he came home, he was a man changed by his time in the far country.

A. V. 17 The Son's Realization - "**when he came to himself**" - This boy's entire time in the far country had been a time of insanity. He hadn't been thinking clearly! Now, the fog lifts and he remembers how good it had been at home with the Father. He remembers that even his father's servants were in better shape than he is! What a realization!

A life lived in sin is a life of insanity! Why? Because the sinner is blind to his condition and to his ultimate destination, **2 Cor. 4:4**. If the devil came to sinners and said, "**Now, you're going to like this sin for a while. It's going to make you feel good! But, eventually, you're going to die, and when you do, you're going to burn in Hell forever.**", he would lose a lot of business! He doesn't do that! He tells people, "**It's fun and you'll love it.**"

There are no consequences! You're going to live forever so enjoy yourself. Live it up!"

Seeing where you are is always the first step in getting to some other place! The first step in getting out of sin is to realize that you are in sin in the first place, **Rom. 3:23**. When that is settled, you will begin to see that God's servants are happy. They have hope. They are not trapped in the same bondage you are in and you will want to be set free! That is the first step in getting out!

B. V. 18-19 **The Son's Resolve** - He makes up his mind to go home! He is tired of life in the far country. He longs for fellowship with the father. He wants to go where he can be loved, fed and cared for. He wants to go home!

Even as he makes up his mind to go home, he realizes what he has done! He sees his own unworthiness and he is willing to go home under any circumstances. He just wants to be back in the father's house. You can see his change in what he says. He left home saying "***Give me!***". He returns home saying "***Make me!***" Before, he did not want to be under the father's authority. Now, he is willing to be a slave, if that is what it takes to go back home. I see a boy who is willing to confess his wrongs, repent of his sins and return to his father.

That is where every lost sinner has to come to before they will ever be saved. God does this through conviction. He sends the Spirit of God to show us our sins and reveal our impending judgment, **John 16:7-11**. The Spirit shows us where we are; He

shows us what we are. He takes the blinders off and lets us see our condition, and he points us to Jesus. No man is saved apart from the convicting ministry of the Spirit of God, **John 6:44**.

C. v. 20a **The Son's Return** - He gets up and he heads home. He doesn't know what will happen when he gets there. He may be rejected. He may be humiliated. He may even be put to death. At this point, he does not care! He is tired of the far country and he is going home!

That is what conviction will do for you! The Spirit of God will make the pain and penalty of sin so real, and the salvation Jesus offers so glorious, that you will do anything to get to Him. You will pay any price. Stop any sin. Embrace any truth, just to be saved!

Do you remember the feeling of God's conviction upon your life? If you are saved, you do! You remember how He hung you out over Hell and how He pointed you to Jesus. That's why you came! III. I think the greater the sinner, the deeper the conviction! Don't let the fact that you were raised in church and good person cause you to doubt your salvation. If the Lord showed you your condition and pointed you to the Savior and you received Him by faith, then you have done all He requires to be saved. It's all about leaving the far country and coming home. Have you?

- I. **Scene 1: An Astonishing Requests**
- II. **Scene 2: An Awful Reality**
- III. **Scene 3: An Altered Return**

IV. V. 20b-24 **SCENE 4: AN AWESOME REUNION**

A. V. 20-21 **He Found Reception** - As this young man headed home, he did not know what he might find there. What he found was incredible! He found a father who had been *longing*, *looking* and *living* for his son's return. He found a father filled with *love*, *compassion* and *grace* who received him and loved him back into fellowship! The father wouldn't even allow the son to finish his little speech. He just loved him back into a right relationship.

1. **The Father Ran** - It was considered undignified for a man to run in that culture. III. Why did this father run to the son? - III. **Deut. 21:18-21**. God runs to meet the sinner to quickly extend mercy and put away danger! He literally interposes Himself between us and His wrath, **1 John 2:2**. If the neighbors had cast stones, they would have struck the Father first!

That is what the doctrine of justification is all about! We are given a right standing with God - **Rom. 8:33-34!**

2. **The Father Kissed Him** - The verb "*kissed*" is in the present tense. Not just one kiss, but continual kissing. In spite of the smell, in spite of the filth, in spite of the hurt, the pain and the loss, the father still kissed the son! This was the ultimate sign of acceptance by the Father.

When we return home, the Father kisses us back into the family - **1 John 1:9**. The Law demanded death, but grace

extended the kiss of love and reconciliation! Because of forgiving grace, there was a feast instead of a funeral!

B. V. 22 **He Found Restoration** - When this boy came home, he had everything he threw away restored by the good grace of the Father.

1. **The Robe - His Purity** - Here stands the son in the rags of his sins. He doesn't look like a child of this father. But, the father orders the best of his robes to be brought and to be put on the son. This robe would cover all the stains and dirt of the pig pen. This robe would make him look like the father. Anyone who saw this boy dressed in his father's robe might have mistaken him for the father! This robe erased all the visible signs of this boy's sinful past.

When a sinner comes home, they receive a robe from the heavenly Father, **Isa. 61:10; Rev. 7:9-14**. This robe of righteousness is not the righteousness of good works or of human goodness. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to all those who receive Him by faith, **Phil. 3:9!** When we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, all the pain and the stain of our past is forever washed away! All the dirt and the filth of a life of sin is forever washed away from us! There are times when the saints of God might be mistaken for their Father! Certainly, they are viewed by their Father as though they had never been away from home at all, **1 Cor. 6:9-11!**

2. **The Ring - His Privileges** - After the robe came the ring. The ring was a symbol of sonship and authority. The one with the ring could speak for the Father! The one with the ring had access to all that belonged to the father! The one with the father's ring was in a position of great privilege!

When sinners repent of their sins and come home, they are given the privilege of being recognized as His sons, **1 John 3:1-2**. They are given the privilege of speaking for the Father, **Acts 1:8**. They are allowed access to all that belongs to the Father as well, **Rom. 8:17, Psa. 24:1; Psa. 50:10**. When we come to the Father, He opens the storehouses of His grace and gives us everything He has! What a privilege belongs to those who go home to the Father!

3. **The Shoes - His Position** - The father calls for shoes to be brought for the feet of his son. Only slaves went barefoot; sons wore shoes! This boy returned home desiring to be a mere servant, but the father is determined to recognize his position as a son! In the boy's eyes, he didn't even deserve anything from the father. The father looked at him and said, ***"This is my son!"*** The father alone determines the position and worth of his children!

Let me remind you today that you are not a nobody if you are saved by grace! We have this idea that we are supposed to think of ourselves as ***"just old sinners saved grace."*** The problem with that statement is the word ***"just."*** When you were saved by grace, you became a child of God! He no

longer sees you as a slave or as a sinner, but he sees you as His precious child, whom He loves like He loves His Son Jesus! We are right to humble ourselves in His presence, but let's never forget that if we are saved by grace, that it is the Father Who determines our standing in the family and not we ourselves!

What I am saying is this: ***Don't let the devil or the flesh keep you down by telling you that you are not worthy to be a child of God.*** If you are truly saved, you have been accepted by the Father in Heaven and He has called you His child! Sounds to me like you are in a special place of privilege!

C. V. 23-24 **He Found Rejoicing** - Ill. The fatted calf was kept for special occasions. The fatted calf was the Father's way of sharing His joy with all around. Instead of a wasted life, the father was celebrating a life redeemed and restored! Everything that was missing in the pig pen was given to him when he returned home.

So it is when a sinner returns home to God the Father! There is rejoicing in Heaven. There is rejoicing in the House of God. And, there is rejoicing in the heart of the redeemed sinner!

Conc: When the story of your life is written, what will it say about you? Will your story be ***A Tale Of A Wasted Life?*** Or, will your story be the story of a person who came to Jesus for salvation?

Where are you today? Are you lost in the far country? You need to come home. There is no better time to do that than right now. The Heavenly Father is waiting to receive you, clean you up, put a ring on your finger, shoes on your feet, wrap you in His righteousness and begin the celebration. If you are not saved you need to come to Jesus right now!

If you are saved, how long has it been since you thanked the Father for the gracious provision He has given you in Jesus?

Maybe you are saved today, but you are away from the Father. You can come home too!