

Your Story In The Prodigal Son

Franklin Church of Christ
Edwin Crozier
July 18, 2004
AM Worship

Introduction:

Do you remember in high school the kids with whom nobody would hang out? They were the nerds, the geeks, the losers and we, if we had to spend any time with them, were constantly on the lookout in hopes no one else actually saw us around them. If we were seen, we knew we would be guilty by association. We too, would be considered nerds, geeks or losers. Jesus was unconcerned with this issue in His day. There was a class of people looked down upon. **Luke 15:1** calls them tax-gatherers and sinners. But Jesus spent time with them despite their social standing. When attacked regarding His association, His defense was that these individuals were important to God. How could He, who had the message of salvation, turn His back on them? As part of His defense, Jesus told one of His most famous parables: The Prodigal Son. Jesus was not just telling a story about some unknown individual and his decline and restoration. He was telling our story, or at least the story Jesus wants to be ours. Look in to the mirror with me as we learn from the prodigal son.

Discussion:

- I. Sin is deceptive.
 - A. The prodigal examined his life in his father's house and decided it was not best for him. He wanted to try his own thing. But he was deceived. Living life his way led to misery. Living life his way led to living in the mire of swine. The prodigal was deceived by his view of the way things work. Only when he hit rock bottom did he come to his senses and see things from his father's perspective.
 - B. Look in the mirror and see yourself here. At some point, you and I reached the age at which we could refuse evil and choose good (**Isaiah 7:15-16**). Some time following that, whether consciously or unconsciously, we examined our lives and decided to step outside of the Father's house. We looked at some sin and decided life would be more fun, we would get more benefit, it would be better for us if we committed sin than if we stayed in a right relationship with God.
 - C. Consider the first sin of history in **Genesis 3:1-6**. How did Satan attack Eve? By telling her what God said was not true. "Look at that fruit," he said. "Eat from that fruit and things will be better for you. You will become like God, knowing good and evil." Of course, Satan neglected to remind Eve of the similarity with God she and Adam already experienced, being created in the image of God. "The Father's way is not best," Satan explained. "Here eat some of this fruit and fulfill your wants and desires." Eve looked at that fruit and "saw that the tree was good for food (it would satisfy her hunger), and that it was a delight to the eyes (it looked good, pretty, desirable, that is, it looked to be something she wanted), and that the tree was desirable to make one wise (it would provide her with a better way than what she already had)." The problem is it was all a big lie. Satan mixed in a little truth with error and sin entered the world. Would it allow Eve to know good and evil? Definitely! But did she really want to know it that way? Definitely not? Was it really desirable? Eve thought so, but look at what it brought. Eve was deceived. She became convinced the Father's way was not the best way. For a moment she enjoyed that fruit. In the end, however, she became mired in the pen of swine and changed the course of the world forever.
 - D. Satan's temptations are not different today. Typically, they are not as conscience as a talking serpent convincing us to do what we have been told is wrong. But the root issue is always the same, "My way is better than God's." Don't be deceived, despite any pleasures you might experience through sin, it is deceptive and all its rewards are temporal and hollow (**Hebrews 3:13**). For a time, he thought his decision was justified. The prodigal had a period of time of great fun, but it ended in the pigpen.
- II. Sin is disgusting.
 - A. We need to understand the parallel here to get the full picture of our story. The picture of the prodigal eating with the pigs is not a picture of a person at the end of his rope after sin has played out. This is a picture of a person in sin, period. Whether we recognize it or not, when we sin, we are in the mire, eating with the pigs. The really sad part is we had the option to still be in our father's house eating a fancy feast.
 - B. To grasp the fullest meaning of this picture, remember that Jesus is speaking to Jews, to whom swine were the most unclean animals known. Here the prodigal finds himself among the unclean, eating the leftovers they did not want. Sin makes us the lowest of the low, unclean, defiled.
 - C. **Proverbs 26:11** speaks to the disgusting and foolish nature of sin. We know this verse applies to sin based on Peter's use of it in **II Peter 2:22**.
 - D. The problem is we rarely see how disgusting sin is. Of course, there are some sins which cause our skin to crawl as we consider rape, incest and murder. But how do we view the sins we commit? What about the "small sins?" What about lying, gossip, forsaking the assembly, lust, cheating, etc.? Even when we are involved in the small sins, we are wallowing in the mire with the pigs and eating the slop of the hogs.
 - E. Gratefully, our story need not end here with the pigs. It can go on.

III. Repentance is necessary.

- A. The story proclaims that the prodigal came to his senses (**vs. 17**). He realized that he had exchanged what was really desirable for something deceptive and despicable. The prodigal did not stop with this realization, he did something about it. When we find ourselves wallowing in the mire and eating with the pigs, we must come to our senses and turn back to our Father.
- B. An interesting thing about this prodigal is seeing the first four Beatitudes of **Matthew 4** in his life.
 - 1. Poverty of spirit – The prodigal recognized his destitute situation. He had thought that he could depend on himself and provide for his own needs and desires. But he could not. He was bankrupt spiritually and the important part is he knew it.
 - 2. Mourning – We see his mourning as he recalls what he could have had, as he recalls what those who are just servants in his Father's house have.
 - 3. Meekness – The prodigal demonstrated meekness in his willingness to submit to his father and be a servant. We see strength held in check and submission as he threw himself on the mercy of another.
 - 4. Hungry and thirsty for righteousness – The prodigal demonstrated his hunger and thirst by the fact that he was willing to humble himself, go to his father and prostrate himself before him, not claiming sonship but rather asking for a position as servant.
- C. We too must have this repentance. We must recognize our bankrupt spiritual state, mourning our station, causing us to be willing to meekly humble ourselves before our Father, doing whatever it takes to receive righteousness. When we find ourselves in the pigpen, we must turn back to the Father. Without going back to the father, the prodigal would have remained in the pigpen. Without meeting the condition of repentance, we will not be saved from our sins.

IV. Grace is necessary.

- A. Understanding that the prodigal had to do something... Understanding that the prodigal had to pick himself up from the pigpen, make the long trek back to his father, humiliate himself before his father and his father's servants and throw himself on his father's mercy does not deny that it was the father's good will and character that allowed the son a place in the family, which all recognized he did not deserve.
- B. Put yourself in the prodigal's shoes as he traveled back from the distant country. What thoughts must he have had? How many times must he have argued with his decision thinking that his father would never accept him, even as a servant? How many times must he have worried about what would happen when he got there? But notice the father when the child returned. There was no doubt in his mind. There was no argument. There was no worry. There was only grace.
- C. Remember, this is our story or could be our story if we follow the example of the prodigal. How often do we think we are so bad that God would never forgive us? How often do we think we can never make it as a Christian? But with God there is no doubt. There is only mercy and grace for those who will make the trip from the distant country to come back to Him.
- D. This parable is an assurance for you and me, that no matter how deeply we wallowed in the mire, we can come to the Father, humbling ourselves before Him and He will grant us His grace. We will not deserve it anymore than did the prodigal, but that is why it is called grace.
- E. Note the assurance Paul gives in **Romans 5:8, 10**. We can have assurance that God will forgive us when we come to Him, because he provided the sacrifice needed for that forgiveness while we were still in our sins. Knowing that, none of us should be afraid to approach God's throne and cast ourselves on His mercy. He has already done what we need for salvation, He simply wants us to come to Him and accept it, submitting to His will.

Conclusion:

Our story is in this parable. Whether we realize it or not, we have already mirrored the prodigal's descent to the pigpen. We, who have already past the age of accountability, have already dined on the leftover hog slop. But this is not where our story must end. We can follow the prodigal back out of the pen and into the open arms of the Father. We must simply humble ourselves and return, submitting wholly to whatever the Father has in store for us. For those who have already done this, remember **II Peter 2:22**. Do not return to wallow in the mire. But for those who have not left the mud and slime, why not turn to the Father now?