

Sermon Series: The Strong Family—5/28/2000—Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Title: “Confronting the Unpleasant”

Text: Luke 15: 25-32

Introduction: *Illus.:* CARRIED GRUDGES

Theme: Living with the past within our homes is often difficult and painful. Yet, when we resolve to cover the past with Jesus’ forgiveness and see each other through the eyes of our Savior, bitterness and animosity disappear and the joy new possibilities and common ground unfold.

Why is living with our family skeletons so hard?

- **It is embarrassing to admit that it could happen to “us”**
 - The background of the prodigal son—greed, arrogance, waste, immorality, humiliation
 - Older brother was “embarrassed” in front of friends who would question why not a party for **THEM** (29)
 - What could be the most embarrassing family moment—unwed pregnancy, jail time, abuse, financial ruin, adultery.
 - **Victim-ology or Victor-ology??**—Which do you choose to live in
 - **“The One who loves us gives us an overwhelming victory in all these difficulties.”**Rom. 8:27
- **It makes me angry that the other made me vulnerable**
 - Brother would now probably have to split his share of inheritance with wayward brother (29—for so many years)
 - You and I share in the consequence of another’s action
 - **ILLUS.: DEMONSTRATED RAGE**
- **It is convicting because it shines a bright light on my self-righteousness**
 - The insecurity of **ME**—the danger of being “found out”
 1. Brother was full of himself—pointing out own goodness—but do you really think he was faultless? (29)
 2. We always live with the nagging fear/doubt—could I be next
 - Living with Christ-esteem in our home and lives gives security
 1. Listen to father’s words: **CHILD ALWAYS WITH ME ALL THAT IS MINE IS YOURS**
 2. Letting the life and cross of Jesus to bring me to the point that **“I am crucified to myself so that it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”** Gal. 2:20
 3. In Christ you and I can always spend our hours counting what we have gained instead of what we have lost

Why is forgiving the “prodigal sinner” in your home even harder?

- **Because they don’t deserve it**
 - Look at what the prodigal did (vss. 12-16)
 - Look at what that child or parent or spouse did!
 - **ILLUS.: LETTING GO OF THE PAST TO START LIVING THE REST OF YOUR LIFE**
- **Because we want justice not mercy**
 - We delight in a little revenge at that moment
 1. We think it will teach “them” a lesson or remove the pain of dealing with it ourselves
 2. Maybe God has allowed us to be in that moment for the ministry or witness to the world which is watching
 - God delights in mercy-- not justice
 1. **“As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of wicked people. I only want them to turn from their wicked ways so they can live.”** Ezekiel 33:11
 2. Heavenly Father applies the “mercy for mercy” principle to all of us indiscriminately—thank Goodness for that

Finding our way back home through forgiveness

- **If you are the prodigal child (the black sheep), listen to the Savior’s call to your heart**
 - It is never too late
 - There is more grace than you could have sinned (As people sinned more and more, God’s wonderful grace became more abundant. Romans 5: 20)
 - The Father will take care of the attitudes of others who need to forgive you
- **If you are the offended, let God soften your heart and let you find peace in forgiveness, again.**
 - Come back home and be restored to the peace and love God can and will provide for you in your family
 - **ILLUS. WE ALL WANT TO BE PACO**

Carried Grudges

One day, two monks were walking through the countryside. They were on their way to another village to help bring in the crops. As they walked, they spied an old woman sitting at the edge of a river. She was upset because there was no bridge, and she could not get across on her own. The first monk kindly offered, "We will carry you across if you would like." "Thank you," she said gratefully, accepting their help. So the two men joined hands, lifted her between them and carried her across the river. When they got to the other side, they set her down, and she went on her way.

After they had walked another mile or so, the second monk began to complain. "Look at my clothes," he said. "They are filthy from carrying that woman across the river. And my back still hurts from lifting her. I can feel it getting stiff." The first monk just smiled and nodded his head.

A few more miles up the road, the second monk griped again, "My back is hurting me so badly, and it is all because we had to carry that silly woman across the river! I cannot go any farther because of the pain." The first monk looked down at his partner, now lying on the ground, moaning. "Have you wondered why I am not complaining?" he asked. "Your back hurts because you are still carrying the woman. But I set her down five miles ago."

That is what many of us are like in dealing with our families. We are that second monk who cannot let go. We hold the pain of the past over our loved ones' heads like a club, or we remind them every once in a while, when we want to get the upper hand, of the burden we still carry because of something they did years ago.-Dr. Anthony T. Evans, *Guiding Your Family in a Misguided World*

Demonstrated Rage

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus. "These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single fist, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold." "Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

Letting go of the past

In his book, Lee: The Last Years, Charles Bracelen Flood reports that after the Civil War, Robert E. Lee visited a Kentucky lady who took him to the remains of a grand old tree in front of her house. There she bitterly cried that its limbs and trunk had been destroyed by Federal artillery fire. She looked to Lee for a word condemning the North or at least sympathizing with her loss. After a brief silence, Lee said, "Cut it down, my dear Madam, and forget it." It is better to forgive the injustices of the past than to allow them to remain, let bitterness take root and poison the rest of our life.

We all want to be Paco

There's a Spanish story of a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father. On Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.

Luke 15:25-32

"His older son was in the field. As he was coming back to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called to one of the servants and asked what was happening.

²⁷"The servant told him, 'Your brother has come home. So your father has killed the fattened calf to celebrate your brother's safe return.'

²⁸"Then the older son became angry and wouldn't go into the house. His father came out and begged him to come in. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'All these years I've worked like a slave for you. I've never disobeyed one of your commands. Yet, you've never given me so much as a little goat for a celebration with my friends. ³⁰But this son of yours spent your money on prostitutes, and when he came home, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

³¹"His father said to him, 'My child, you're always with me. Everything I have is yours. ³²But we have something to celebrate, something to be happy about. This brother of yours was dead but has come back to life. He was lost but has been found.' "