

Sermon Series: "Bible Father-figures" – Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—June 4, 2006

Title: "A Forgiving Father"

Text: Luke 15: 11-32

Intro.: *Ills.: Unforgiven Prodigal Son*

Theme: Understanding the Heavenly Father's forgiving love and receiving it into our hearts involves understanding our individual need for it.

A tale of two sons

· The wayward son (**Print and read Luke 15: 11-17**)

1. Selfish, self-assured, squanderer, survival-minded—all traits applauded by the world but opposed by God
 - a. Often, we are too proud to acknowledge our brokenness and try to work our way out of it only to work self deeper
 - b. **Ills.: Beginner's Bad Luck**
 - c. *"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." James 4: 6*
2. Living for the moment and for self-pleasuring --never taking into account the natural, end consequence of his choice
 - a. *If I have fought with wild animals in Ephesus, what have I gained according to the way people look at things? If the dead are not raised, "Let's eat and drink because tomorrow we're going to die!" Don't let anyone deceive you. Associating with bad people will ruin decent people. 1 Cor. 15:32-33*
3. In the quest of the world's promise for happiness, instead chewing on its cud of refuse
 - a. Son ended up settling for a shell of life which he could never imagined as a good Jewish boy he would be living
 - b. Despite our many missteps and bad choices we do not have to continue to choose to live in that shadow-land
 - c. *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world . . . gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. Eph. 2:1-5*

· The righteous but bitter son **Print and read Luke 15: 25-31**)

1. "Good boy" always **doing the right thing---for the wrong reason**
 - a. Thinking that he had to earn his father's love
 - b. Do you live out your life under the guilt driven drumbeat of keeping God off your back?
2. Eaten up from within over jealousy and bitterness toward the Father over his daily ration
 - a. Never celebrating what was given and never receiving because never asked
 - b. *You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:2-3*
3. Missing out on what you really have because of fear over not getting your just due
 - a. **Ills.: Can't earn heaven**
 - b. What we really deserve is this, *"The wages of sin is death. . ." Romans 6: 23a*
 - c. What we really need is this, *"But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Romans 6:23b*
 - d. Living life out in...could of, should of, would of thinking. . . when all you needed was **GRACE**

A story of a Father's unconditional love (Print Luke 15: 18-24, 31-32)

· Uncompromised grace

1. While the younger son is rehearsing his carefully planned penitential lines, the Father is **waiting, seeing, hugging**
2. While the oldest son was sulking, the Father was **seeking, begging, reconfirming** his gracious heart toward him
3. *Once you were separated from God. The evil things you did showed your hostile attitude. But now Christ has brought you back to God by dying in his physical body. He did this so that you could come into God's presence without sin, fault, or blame. Col. 1:21-22*

4. **Ills.: Sin enslaves, forgiveness frees**

· Extreme amnesty assured

1. Sometimes we think we can't come home (youngest and older son) because of our sin (illegal aliens needing amnesty)
2. **Ills.: True Forgiveness**
3. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:8-9*

Unforgiven Prodigal Son

An ancient Asian legend tells the story of a man who had a wild and impetuous son. Curtis E. Liens, in *The Man with Dirty Hands*, says: The boy became involved with the ruffians of the village who persuaded him to join them in a robbery of his own father's treasury house. After the robbery was over, his friends fled with the stolen treasure and left him to face the guilt of the crime alone. The young man was desperate. He was deserted by his friends, and he had betrayed the trust of his father. But his greatest crime was that he had brought public dishonor on the family name. And, in a culture where ancestors are worshiped and family integrity is a sacred trust, this was the worst wrong of all. Broken and deeply repentant, he went to his father and begged forgiveness. Graciously, it was granted. The father called all of the members of the family together to celebrate the reconciliation and return of his son. When all had enjoyed the banquet to the fullest, the father stood and lifted his cup of rice wine for a toast. But, as the son drank deeply the contents of his cup, he grabbed his throat and fell lifeless across the table. The son had been poisoned. The father, with ceremonial dignity nodded to the guests. Each in turn graciously and politely bowed to the father as they silently left the banquet hall. All was now put right. The son had paid the price of his pardon with poison. His honor had been restored. The family integrity and honor were reestablished. The unfortunate incident was closed. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, another father is deeply shamed by his son's wild and reckless behavior. But when that son comes back and begs forgiveness, what a different reaction he gets. **Kevin Miller, Wheaton, Illinois; source: Richard Carol Hoefler, *And He Told Them a Story* (C.S.S. Publishing, 1979)**

Beginner's Bad Luck

My teenage son was in such a hurry to try out his new surfboard that, oblivious of the warning flags, he dashed straight out into the waves. Immediately, an authoritative voice boomed, "You are an inexperienced surfer. Return to shore." Embarrassed, he came ashore but not without asking the lifeguard how he knew he was a novice. "Easy. You've got your wet suit on backwards." **H.J. Duffy, Livingston, Texas. *Christian Reader*, "Lite Fare."**

Can't earn heaven

An old tale speaks of a man who died and faced the angel Gabriel at heaven's gates. The angel said, "Here's how this works. You need a hundred points to make it into heaven. You tell me all the good things you have done, and I will give a certain number of points for each of them. The more good there is in the work that you cite, the more points you will get for it. When you get to a hundred points, you get in." "Okay," the man said, "I was married to the same woman for 50 years and never cheated on her, even in my heart." Gabriel replied, "That's wonderful. That's worth three points." "Three points?" said the man incredulously. "Well, I attended church all my life and supported its ministry with my money and service." "Terrific!" said Gabriel, "that's certainly worth a point." "One point?" said the man with his eyes beginning to show a bit of panic. "Well, how about this: I opened a shelter for the homeless in my city, and fed needy people by the hundreds during holidays." "Fantastic, that's good for two more points," said the angel. "TWO POINTS!" cried the man in desperation. "At this rate the only way I will get to heaven is by the grace of God." "Come on in," said Gabriel. **Bryan Chapell, *Holiness By Grace* (Crossway Books, 2001), pp. 22-23; used by permission of Crossway Books, a division of Good New**

Sin Enslaves, Forgiveness Frees

Richard Hoefler's book *Will Daylight Come?* includes a homey illustration of how sin enslaves and forgiveness frees. A little boy visiting his grandparents as given his first slingshot. He practiced in the woods, but he could never hit his target. As he came back to Grandma's back yard, he spied her pet duck. On an impulse he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck fell dead. The boy panicked. Desperately he hid the dead duck in the woodpile, only to look up and see his sister watching. Sally had seen it all, but she said nothing. After lunch that day, Grandma said, "Sally, let's wash the dishes." But Sally said, "Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you, Johnny?" And she whispered to him, "Remember the duck! So Johnny did the dishes. Later Grandpa asked if the children wanted to go fishing, Grandma said, "I'm sorry, but I need Sally to help make supper." Sally smiled and said, "That's all taken care of. Johnny wants to do it." Again she whispered, "Remember the duck." Johnny stayed while Sally went fishing. After several days of Johnny doing both his chores and Sally's, finally he couldn't stand it. He confessed to Grandma that he'd killed the duck. "I know, Johnny," she said, giving him a hug. "I was standing at the window and saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave of you. - **Steven Cole**

True Forgiveness

Thomas A. Edison was working on a crazy contraption called a "light bulb" and it took a whole team of men 24 straight hours to put just one together. The story goes that when Edison was finished with one light bulb, he gave it to a young boy helper, who nervously carried it up the stairs. Step by step he cautiously watched his hands, obviously frightened of dropping such a priceless piece of work. You've probably guessed what happened by now; the poor young fellow dropped the bulb at the top of the stairs. It took the entire team of men twenty-four more hours to make another bulb. Finally, tired and ready for a break, Edison was ready to have his bulb carried up the stairs. He gave it to the same young boy who dropped the first one. That's true forgiveness. **James Newton, *Uncommon Friends*.**

Luke 15:11-32

¹¹Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. ¹⁷"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

¹⁸I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

²⁰So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' ²⁸"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹" 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' " NIV