

Sermon Outline - Session 6

The Feast of the Father



Text: Luke 15:11-32 NIV

Alternate Title: We Had to Celebrate

Introduction: We have looked at the story of the younger brother, then we put it into its context with the story of the elder brother. Then we put the story of the two brothers into the context of the whole chapter. Each time we saw another important part of Jesus' message. But we are not quite done. We need to see the story in the context of the whole Bible. Jesus was immersed in the Scriptures, and in this story he is giving us the essence of the whole Biblical storyline in one vivid narrative. If we see that, we will get a 30,000 foot view of what the Bible is all about. We learn about 1) the human condition, 2) the divine solution, and 3) the new communion.

1. The human condition—verses 13-17.

- The younger brother's sin turned him into an exile from his home. He had disgraced his family and the entire community would have been outraged. He would have had to take his money and go far away, and he did.
- When he did so, he became an image of the human race. For we were made for life in the Garden of Eden. Our true home is in the presence of God. But we have lost our home. We are all exiles.
- "Home" is the place that truly fits and suits us. We were made to know and serve God, to live in his presence and enjoy his love and beauty.
 - However, because we wanted to be our own Saviors and Lords, we lost God, and therefore we wander in the world and experience what the philosopher Heidegger called *unheimlichkeit*. The word translates as "eeriness" or "uncanniness" but literally it means "away from home." Heidegger is referring to the anxiety and spiritual nausea that comes from never feeling at home in the world.
 - This world doesn't address the needs of our heart. We long for a love that can't be lost, for escape from death, for the triumph of justice over wrong. But such things will never be found here.
- When the younger brother "came to his senses" he realized that he needed to go home, but how? He realized he was an outcast, so why would they receive him? Still, he went home.

2. The divine solution—verses 31-32.

- The centerpiece of the parable is a feast. The father throws a feast, filled with "music and dancing" and the greatest delicacies, to mark the reconciliation and restoration of his son. He says that when the younger son came home, "we had to celebrate." There was no choice. Why is the feast so important?

- In the Old Testament, meals ratified covenants, celebrated victories, and marked all special family occasions and transitions, such as births, weddings, and funerals. Also, a feast was established to mark the greatest event in the salvation history of God’s people to that time—the Passover. Why were meals so important?
 - In ancient times, meals were prolonged affairs that lasted all evening, usually until bedtime—since there was little else to do after the sun went down and after a strenuous day of labor. So evening meals became the center of family life and therefore both a symbol and practice of intimacy.
 - But we don’t need to be people of the first century to grasp all this. It is at meals that you most feel at home. In a meal your body is getting what it needs—the pleasure and nourishment of food and rest. But also, at meals your heart is getting what it needs—laughter and friendship. Even today, if you have a family reunion or some kind of homecoming—you eat. And it is at those great feasts that no matter what else is going wrong in our lives, we feel almost at home.
- The feast means that God will bring us home some day.
 - As Jesus says: “Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 8:11). Because of our true elder brother, God will some day make this world home again. He’s going to wipe away death, suffering, and tears, and will give us bodies that run and are never weary.
 - And when we get there, we will say something like what Jewel the Unicorn said at the end of the Chronicles of Narnia: “I’ve come home at last! I belong here. This is the land I’ve been looking for all my life, though I never knew it!”
- The younger brother did not expect to be brought back into the family, he did not expect a feast, since he had sinned. But that is what he gets. And the elder brother objects. Why?
 - Because meals signified acceptance and relationship, the religious leaders forbid believers from eating with “sinners.” To eat with someone was to receive him, virtually as family. How could you do that for someone who has rejected God? Besides that, didn’t everyone know that you become like the people you love and spend the most time with? If you eat with sinners, it was reasoned, you would become a sinner.
 - The Jewish dietary laws were extremely elaborate. They were seen as quite effective in keeping Jews from being polluted by the pagan practices of their neighbors. In fact, during the time between testaments, leading up to Jesus’ day, preoccupation with ritual purity increased, as Judea came under the boot of one set of pagan masters after another. Meals more and more became boundary markers between the righteous and sinners.
 - But Jesus shattered this practice, as we see in Luke 15:2. He eats with the notoriously wicked and the marginalized. How can he do this? How can sinners be included in the feast?

3. The new communion—“this brother of your was dead and is alive again.”

- Jesus leaves his own true home (Phil. 2), wanders without a home (Matt 8:20), and is finally crucified outside the gate of Jerusalem, a sign of exile and rejection (Heb. 13:11-12). Jesus experiences the exile that the human race deserves. He is alienated and cast out so we can be brought home.
- On the cross, Jesus loses fellowship and communion with the father. He cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt 27:45). He is forsaken and “cast out” of the family, so that we can be brought in.
- As we can see from the parable itself, Jesus calls younger brothers to repent. He does not only eat with them for the sake of “inclusiveness” or just to defy convention—rather he calls people to change.
- And he gives us the foretaste of that great feast, what we call “The Lord’s Supper” or Communion. To sit at the Communion table you don’t have to be perfect, only repentant. So anyone can come, and anyone does come.

- Think of it like this—the ultimate son, who was dead and cut off, is now alive again. So we *have* to celebrate! And the way we celebrate what he has done for us, is to create a new community of forgiven sinners, in which anyone can be a part. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done, it doesn't matter what your race or class or background is. Any repentant sinner can come and be a brother and a sister, because of the death and resurrection of our true elder brother, who took our exile and punishment upon himself.
- The death and resurrection of the Son, and the love of the Father, create a new community of men and women who regularly break bread together to celebrate the new life and common union they have through Jesus. It is not enough just to have an individual personal relationship with God through Christ. You have to be an active part of the feast, the new community, the family of God. That is where together we become conformed into the image of the one who did all this for us.

Good source books:

Bailey, Kenneth. *Finding the Lost Cultural Keys to Luke 15*. Concordia, 1992.
 Blomberg, Craig. *Contagious Holiness: Jesus' Meals with Sinners*. IVP, 2005.
 Bock, Darrell L. *Luke 9:51-24:53*. Baker, 1994.
 Ellis, E.Earle. *The New Century Bible Commentary: The Gospel of Luke*. Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1974.
 Wilcock, Michael. *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Luke*. IVP, 1979.

Sessions:

Session	Sermon	Book Chapters	DVD	Group Study
ONE - The Parable			Film	✓
TWO - The People Around Jesus	✓	Introduction and Chapter 1	Session Two Clip	✓
THREE - The Two Lost Sons	✓	Chapters 2 and 3	Session Three Clip	✓
FOUR - The Elder Brother	✓	Chapter 4	Session Four Clip	✓
FIVE - The True Elder Brother	✓	Chapter 5	Session Five Clip	✓
SIX - The Feast of the Father	✓	Chapters 6 and 7	Session Six Clip	✓