

# 2022.08.28.A The Prodigal Son, Part 1 - Carl Robbins - 82622...

Wed, 9/14 9:03PM 34:19

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

verse, father, son, parable, prodigal, jesus, sinners, repenting, sin, pharisees, life, tax collectors, repentance, lost, servants, carefully, called, picture, receive, home

## SPEAKERS

Carl Robbins



Carl Robbins 00:00

And I always see it as a great honor to preach God's word. This week I had an invitation to go and speak to a group of high school students and the person who was making the invitation said, you probably wouldn't enjoy doing something like this. And I said, I enjoy anytime I have an opportunity to proclaim the scriptures. But there are certain texts, when we come to them, such as Isaiah 53 or the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer, the 10 Commandments that I feel as though I should take off my shoes that I'm on holy ground. And our text today is just such a text. It's particularly deep, precious to me. Because this parable is my autobiography. I can supply dates and places. It has my name written all over it, and perhaps some of yours as well, for the last several weeks, and then for the next several weeks, we're going to be studying the parables of Christ, probably about 20 of Christ's 40 parables. But this by far, the parable you see before you in Luke 15, and I hope you have your Bible open, because we'll be looking at this parable under the microscope this morning. This is the most famous of all of Christ's parables. It's been called the Pearl and Crown of the parables. JC Ryle calls it the most full and instructive of the parables and BB Warfield said the story is artistically perfect. It's been called the gospel within the gospel because it portrays so vividly several elements of the saving good news. Literary giants such as Charles Dickens and Ralph Waldo Emerson, held it up as the model for beauty and simplicity of language, and excellence of storyline. It's the third of three unified stories. If you'll look back over to Luke 15:1, you'll notice as you as you trace the three stories, it differs slightly from the preceding two the first two parables that we looked at last Sunday morning picture the Savior as searching for something lost. But this parable that we'll look at today focuses on Jesus receiving the lost. And that's actually the critique of Jesus, in verses 1 through 2. When we come to our parable today, the third of three, the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus is getting around to answering the critique. We're going to need the help of the Holy Spirit to hear this parable arright and so let's ask for that now. Oh Lord, we confess that we don't naturally grasp the things of the kingdom. The good news even after all these years sounds scandalous to us. So once again, give us ears to hear and hearts to receive. We ask that you would take away even the smallest of distractions from us, and you would remove our objections to Your Word. We pray in the name of the one who is the WAY and the TRUTH and the LIFE, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Look carefully at Luke 15, in verses 1 and 2, and

you'll see the the setting for this parable, the whole context of Luke 15 must be grasped to understand this parable. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, in the last few months of his public ministry, and he's heading towards the cross. He's been ministering publicly for three years now faithfully preaching the kingdom of God, calling sinners to repentance and faith, healing the sick, even healing the dying thus proving his claims to be the Messiah. And at every step of the way for three years, the Pharisees have dogged Him. The Pharisees even though they were a small theological party in Israel, have an oversized, outsized, massive influence on the culture and life of Israel. They're marked by a hardcore legalism, adding their own laws to the Old Testament, ceremonial civil and moral law. Frequently, they just simply ignore what's written in Scripture, preferring their own manmade regulations. And even though they profess a high morality, Jesus calls them out repeatedly as corrupt, greedy, and unloving. They hate Jesus with a bitter passion, because he keeps on pointing out their hypocrisy and self righteousness and their, their faulty understanding of the Old Testament. And they attribute any power he has and any wisdom he expresses, to Beelzebub. They slander him, they vilify him. The verse 1 of Luke 15 We read that the tax collectors and here's the real problem that keeps coming up over and over again, the tax collectors and sinners were were coming to Jesus to hear him. And of course, the Pharisees complained, and they made this charge against Jesus. You'll see it there in verse 1. This man receives sinners and eats with them. And in response, Jesus preaches a three point sermon, or more accurately, a three parable sermon and look carefully at the structure of chapter 15. In verses 3 through 7, you have the parable of the lost sheep. In verses 8 through 10, you have the parable of the lost coin. And now in verses 11 through 32, Jesus focuses on the parable of the lost son, obviously, what ties all these together is lostness. And I want you to notice as we dive into the saga of the prodigal son, I want you to look very carefully at every detail with me, because the details are so important, and they're so rich. Normally Jewish sons would stay in their father's business, and serve under him, waiting until he died before inheriting their share of the family assets. But this son, we begin to see in verse 11, this son can't wait. He has both eyes on the world outside the father's house, and his heart is drawn by its allure. And so with incredible arrogance and stupidity, he comes to his father in verse 12, and says, give me my portion. And the father responds to the sons unreasonable request with unimaginable generosity. Since the oldest son would get a double portion of all inheritance. This means that the younger son was given one-third of all the property and the livestock and the servants. And when we read in verse 13, that the younger son gathered all together, it could mean more carefully translated, he liquidated all the assets. And so this would mean in verse 13, that the son sold off the father's property, livestock and servants, and the accumulated gains of several generations are quickly liquidated at fire sale prices, the son longed for a life away from all authority and accountability. He wanted to be able to go where he wanted, get up when he wanted, return when he pleased. Life in the father's house had been so claustrophobic for him. He wanted to be as far away as possible from the watchful eye of the father. He's in full scale revolt, he wants nothing more of the Father's values and laws. No doubt this deeply wounded his father, and this is a picture of our selfish and ungrateful attitude. Think of how we are characterized in Romans chapter 1, before conversion, although they knew God, they didn't glorify him as God, nor were they thankful, but they became futile and their thoughts, their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, that could be written as an inscription over the prodigal son's life. This is - make no mistake about it in verses 11 through 13. This is a total rejection of the family by the son, total disrespect, complete dishonor. There are recorded instances in Jewish literature of sons who did this and asked for their share while dad was still alive. And they received a slap across the face, which was the method of rebuking such impudence by saying to his father, I want my inheritance. The son is saying, I've been waiting around for you to die. And since you won't hurry up and die, I need my inheritance now. The son was clearly communicating Dad, I don't want a relationship with you. I'm saying no to the family, to the community, to your way of life,

you are a barrier to my happiness and my freedom. Of course, this is a 3-D Technicolor picture of something that happens every day. Covenant children, raised in the Lord's house raised by believing parents who say, I think I'll take the world. They leave the people of God, and they prefer to make their lot with the Christ-rejecting unbelievers. The scene changes. Look at verse 13 to 16. The prodigal goes away as fast and as far as he can to what's called the far country. He goes straight to a Gentile, a pagan land in the far country, where no one knows his father. No one restricts him, no one restrains him he answers to no one. And as he looks out the window of his new penthouse apartment, he says, Life is sweet. I always knew it was better out here, and he has great freedom to sin. And when the text says in verse 13, that he wasted his possessions with prodigal living. Prodigal means unrestrained, extravagant. He is to use the old English term he's a wastrel he has a wallet full of Dad's money and so he has no problem making new friends and, and gathering a posse a crew and entourage. He's the life of the party. Drinks are on him every time. Women that never seemed to do so before now, now that he's buying find him devastatingly handsome. Everyone laughs at his witty stories and clever jokes, and he thinks I love this place. No one ever thought I was clever back home. But they're just dullards. He gratifies every lust and deprives himself of nothing. In fact, in verse 30, we'll get to that next week, we find that much of his money went to pay for prostitutes. His father's legacy was supposed to set him up for life. But soon he notices that his bank statement is looking lean. As he tries to remember where it all went. And what he has to show for it. He realizes he's practically given it all away. He has a life thrown away and nothing to show for it except some diseases. And in this brief word of verse 13, and 14, we have a picture of you and I by nature. We're always proud, and self willed, fleeing from fellowship with the Father, wasting our time and strength and affections on foolish and unprofitable pursuits. Then comes an unthinkable saga. No doubt when Jesus tells us - remember, he's telling it to a group of tax collectors and sinners and critical Pharisees, no doubt when he tells this part the Pharisees gasp. Look at verse 14 to 16. For the prodigal times change quickly, two factors coincide to plunge him into deep distress. First of all, we're told in verse 14, he's spent everything. He's broke. And then second, in verse 14, there's a severe famine, where he is people get desperate, and he has no savings, no resources, but he's still nowhere, ready to go home, you at this point would say, Oh, he's hit bottom. Oh, my friends. He's a long way from hitting bottom. He planned on spending a lot of money, but he'd never planned on running out of money. When he'd come here to the far country in search of real community and all those friends that were willing to sit up late and drink and talk about deep philosophical things, his community, he'll go to them, they would help him out. He bought drinks for them 100 times. No. None of those friends were glad to help him. They've been glad to help him spend his money. But they now had no willingness to help him. He's a foreigner. He's rootless. He's a vagabond. He's a stranger from a strange land. And so he does what seems so distasteful just a few months before - he seeks a job. But he has no connections and his resume is full of holes, and he can only find one job Pigpen attendant. So now he loses his identity. He's become like a Gentile, tending pigs and working on the Sabbath. And by the way, he's just like the tax collectors. Look up to verse 1 and 2, and I want you to see why this would strike such a note with the tax collectors. He's become just like the tax collectors of, of Luke 15, who'd hired themselves out to the Romans. And to make matters worse, he's so desperately hungry and poor, that the slop that the pigs are eating begins to look good. According to verse 16, he he envies the hogs. When we lived in Las Vegas, Sandy would take the second graders she taught at Shiloh Christian school, she would take them out to a pig farm after they read Charlotte's Web and they got to see the pigs and she would let her second grade students pet the pigs and they would get a real picture of what swine life was like. But as I went once and I watched the pigs eating the gray, slop they ate I wondered how hungry would you have to be to think that looked tasty? Well, the prodigal now has hit bottom. He's on Skid Row. He groans and complains and no one cares. He's broke. He's dirty. He's lonely, and rather than enjoying the

dignity and abundance of his father's house he's degraded into poverty in a pigsty. His party has become a prison. He's come here for freedom and was now a virtual slave. He had planned on lust and drunkenness without interruption or consequences. But what he got was loneliness and emptiness and pain. Sin is a hard master. And the servants of sin find it out some sooner some later. The writer of Proverbs says in Proverbs 13, the way of the Transgressor is hard. Now at this point, our Lord's Pharisaic hearers are reeling as Jesus is telling them this and they, they would point to texts like Leviticus 11 that say the swine will be unclean to you. And these Pharisees are whispering to themselves. This young man in Jesus story, he slid into the lowest degradation. He's taken up an unlawful vocation herding pigs, and he's now ceremonially unclean. He's beyond any help. He has blown it too badly. He's gone too far. And as the Pharisees look across the room, at the tax collectors and sinners, they're thinking, He's talking about you. You too. You've blown it big time you are too far gone. The story moves to the awakening. Look at verses 17 through 19. The prodigal in the far country comes to his senses. He looks around and says, What have I become? I've hit bottom. I've not broken God's laws. They've broken me. And then the thoughts of his father's house come flooding over him. And he says in verse 17, he begins to think and remember back life in the father's house, and he says, My father has servants and he treats them well. My master here, doesn't care if I starve. His tears begin to flow. He remembers. My father was kind and generous, never harsh. He was not a hard man. What was I thinking, leaving leaving such a great place and such a wonderful, loving father? I love the language of our 17 because this is the pivot of the parable. Look carefully at verse 17. We read when he came to himself, it's more literally when he came to his senses. What the Scripture is saying is this - is the lost man, the prodigal is not in his right mind. The Fall has corrupted his discernment and his judgment. So listen to me carefully. Look at verse 17. Sin will make you stupid. Sin will make you crazy. Sin will make you engage in incredibly bad decisions. And of course, this awakening is all of God's grace. This is the Holy Spirit giving light to the mind and sweeping away the darkness. When the Holy Spirit sovereignly and graciously does awaken a man, that man now has a clear assessment of his bankrupt condition. He engages in clear headed self examination, he stops rationalizing and blame shifting. Notice as well. When the Holy Spirit graciously awakens a man. He starts thinking about others. He thinks about his father, and the servants back home. He isn't just so focused on himself. He lifts his eyes and looks around and sees others. And now by God's grace, the prodigal was beginning to personify the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. He's poor in spirit. He's mourning over sin. He has desperate spiritual hunger. And he has a monologue with his own soul. Look carefully at verses 18 through 19. And I want you to notice his Four Point Plan that he hatches there in the pigsty in the far country. Point one, I'm going to get up and go home. First thing he's done, that's made sense in months. Point two. When I get there, I'm going to humble myself and confess my sin to Dad, no excuses, no blaming him, and no blaming his poor parenting. I'll tell the truth and call my thoughts and actions sin. Point three of his plan. I will tell dad, he no longer needs to call me son. The prodigal gets it. He understand that no one owes him anything. And by his sin, he has forfeited all his rights. And then the fourth point, he said, I'm going to take a chance here. I'm going to go way out on a limb. I'm going to ask dad to hire me on his servants staff. I will be glad to be a hireling a wage earner for Dad and live out my days on the fringes of his estate and seek to pay him back all I've squandered. I'll probably never be able to do it, but I'm going to give it a go. But this isn't just a pipe dream. It's not just thoughts or talk. Look what he does in verse 20. He takes action. Because real faith, real repentance and faith acts, he moves his feet in the direction of his convictions. And look carefully at his repentance in verses 18 through 21. real repentance always breaks off from sin. The repenter seeks to make a clean break from lawlessness, he realizes that feelings and tears and wishes are useless until they're accompanied by action and change. What makes the prodigal's confession and repentance so profound is the full embracing of both his guilt and his consequences. He's squandered his inheritance, so he

makes no claim on what remains. He's deeply hurt his father. So he makes no claims on the privileges of sonship. When a man is truly repentant, he'll confess his sins without any excuses. No qualifications, no explanations, and a full acceptance of the consequences. Notice he doesn't say to dad when he gets there. Oh, Dad, I was wrong, for blowing up and leaving, but you were wrong, dad for being so tight. If you would have just given me some space, I wouldn't have rebelled. No. The prodigal takes all the guilt and blames no one else. He's not asking for justice, only mercy, and he's ready to do penance, or stay in the servants quarters or stay out back of the servants quarters. And only after all the lost money is restored would he even dare to suggest reconciliation. He's like Emperor Henry. Emperor Henry the fourth the German ruler of the Holy Roman Empire in the 11th century. In 1075, Emperor Henry was excommunicated by Pope Gregory and to be restored Emperor Henry had to walk through the snow of the Alps, barefoot to the Pope's winter castle in Canossa, Northern Italy to show Pope Gregory his contrition and when he finally reached the gate of the Pope's castle in January of 1077, snow and ice piled up everywhere. The Pope sent out word that Emperor Henry should wait, wearing only an itchy hairshirt. So the Emperor waited one day, the snow began to fall harder. He waited a second day. And finally on the third day, the pope opened the door to his castle and finally only then removed the sentence of excommunication. The prodigal was ready for something like that. But what he received was outside of his wildest imaginations. Look at verse 20-24. First of all, you have the watching father. Do you see him there in verse 20? How could the father have seen the prodigal a long way off if he had not been expectantly watching? What the son will find out is that even when the Father and the Father's house were the furthest thing from his mind when he was in the far country, the wayward son was never off the father's mind and heart. The father could recognize every feature of his son even from afar off, every characteristic of his son had been so carefully remembered that when he saw the dim outline on the horizon, and that familiar stride, even though it had turned into a shuffle, the father leaped, sprinted as quickly as an old man can. And as the father approached the prodigal running, he could see the filth, the downtrodden look, as he got even closer, he could smell that unmistakable pigpen scent. But that didn't slow him down. Slow may be the steps of repentance but swift are the feet of forgiveness. And we're given a profound insight into the father in verse 20. Look what we read of him there. He had compassion, the father was ready to receive. Now I want you to notice a couple of details about the father's welcome First of all, there's the running. Dignified men in that culture didn't run. But the Greek word used here in verse 20, the word *dramōn* is the term used for racers in the Olympic Games. The father is in an all out sprint. With one hand, he's holding up his robes so he can run. He looks totally ridiculous. He doesn't care. He's fixated on the object of his love. And then notice the affection. Look at verse 20. He falls on his neck and kisses him. The welcome is not lukewarm. The son doesn't have to wonder for a moment if he's welcome. And then I want you to notice the cut off. I love how the father cuts off the son, he interrupts him, he's rude, because the son begins his speech, his repentance speech, and he gets this far - Father I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, I'm no longer worthy to be called your son, he has more. But the father cuts him off, he won't let him finish his statement. He turns to his servants and begins giving orders. Doesn't just show that the Father, Our Father, isn't just willing to receive sinners, but he's eager to receive repenting sinners. Each of the things the father orders, look at verse 22 and 23, where the father snaps off several orders. Each of the things the Father orders for the son have immense significance and they demonstrate honor, for example, in verse 22, when the father says bring him the robe, the son was right there to remove his filthy rags, that stunk and were soaked with pig slop. And he used to don a gorgeous, expensive robe. This was a mark of extreme honor. When a king wanted to show respect for a visiting dignitary, he would present him with his own beautiful costly robe. So the father's command is, treat this son of mine as the guest of honor in my house. And then there's the ring. Look at verse 22. The signet ring was given often from a king to his Prime Minister signifying transfer of authority. And so

both of these things, the robe and now the ring were ways of saying, Son, everything I have is yours. And then there are the sandals in verse 22. Shoes were a luxury. Slaves went barefoot but not sons. And then there's the fatted calf in verse 23. Meat was rarely eaten in this culture, especially veal. This was saved for a most special occasion. And this welcome teaches us that the extravagant, excessive crazy head over heels in love God has for repenting sinners. And I want you to notice the father's joy tucked away in verse 23, and 24. Remember, in the earlier two parables in Luke 15, the lost sheep, the lost coin, all of Heaven rejoices, well, let's it's stated twice here, look at verse 23, and 24. Where the father commands in verse 23, merriment. And then in verse 24, we read they began to be merry. Just one straying repenting sinner comes home, and the party is on. Look at verse 24. How does it end? A party started And so what we're being taught is whenever a sinner repents and comes to the Father's house, merriment, joy, laughter, dancing is always the appropriate response. Now, a fatted calf what the Father had commanded in verse 23, the fatted calf could feed about 200 people. So lots of people would be invited over to celebrate with the Father and the Son. But isn't that what we've already seen earlier in this chapter, look at verse 6 and verse 9, where Jesus had taught leading up to this with the lost coin and the lost sheep, where the when there is repentance, that the it's always said, Rejoice with me. And so the father gets anybody from far and wide, who's possibly seen his pain and his sadness, he says, Now, you need to come and see my rejoicing. How do we apply this word? Let me make half a dozen or so applications to us. This doctrine, of the forgiveness of the acceptance of repenting sinners, is guaranteed to offend all Pharisees, ancient and modern. The Pharisees had murmured and complained because Jesus was eating with repenting sinners. Go back to verse 1 and 2, that's what kicked off this whole chapter. These three tales of losses - loss coin, lost sheep now lost son. What they'd complained about so much was that Jesus was eating with repenting sinners. But what Jesus is saying is, oh, you Pharisees, it's worse than you think. I don't just eat with repenting sinners. I run down the road to meet them. I showered them with kisses. I embrace them. I clothe them in royal garb and I escort them home that I may eat with them. So if you're going to get offended, get really offended and understand how big this is. This news of a welcoming, greeting, rejoicing father over repenting sinners will scandalize Pharisees in the year 2022 as much as it did in the year 30 AD. The second application. What you see a picture of here is grace triumphing over sin at its worst. This filthy sinner is given undeserved sonship undeserved forgiveness, undeserved honor. Why did he earn or deserve any of it? No. All by grace. Grace is astoundingly generous. It's the son who should be bringing gifts to the Father. But he comes home with empty hands owing a great debt. It's the Father who gives and delights in giving. This is a picture of grace. Another application, sin is always madness and folly. Jesus doesn't stint on this, he doesn't back off, he doesn't pull his punches. Look at verse 17. The point that he's making there is that sin is always madness. I said it a moment ago. It's stupidity. It's craziness. It's madness. To leave such a generous father. It's madness to blow your inheritance in such a wasteful manner. It's madness to wallow in such degradation. Jesus views conversion as an exit from madness, and a coming to your senses. It's the beginning of the reversal of the debilitating effects of the fall. A fourth application. Jesus is telling prodigals and I may be speaking to you this morning. You can come home to the Father's house. If you'll repent, turn, the father will receive you and not reject you. Isn't that the charge that's being made against Jesus. He receives sinners, how dare he? Why do you think sinners sought him out? Because he had a message of hope for them. He was saying to them, you're the lost sheep the lost coin the lost son that I'm searching for, if you'll come home to the Father's house, you will be received. Jesus is saying, This is why I came to this earth. This is why I would be humiliated, mocked and killed so that I might receive sinners. I would speak this morning especially to covenant children who've seen and tasted of the mercy of God and then gone into the far country. If you've blown it, the father will welcome repenting and returning sinners. A fifth application. When the father receives returning and repenting sinners, the past is wiped



out. The father treats the prodigal as if he had been most exemplary in all his conduct and how quickly he commands His servants to strip off every vestige of the evil past. There's some of you today who really think the gospel is too good to believe. You're still struggling mightily with a lifestyle or an action from 10 or even 40 years ago. There are women in this room who are convinced that that abortion you had 35 years ago, is being held over your head by the Father, even though you've repented in bitter tears. My friend, do you hear this word? Your sins are wiped clean by the blood of Jesus. Final application. The gospel gives better than you can plan or dream. The prodigal son would have been content to come to the Father's house and be a slave - he said so - and work. But the father has something better for him. Just so the gospel gives more than we can even imagine it gives forgiveness, reconciliation, and sonship. Let's pray together. Father full of grace give us ears to hear this word. Enable prodigals to come home today and give your people great joy when they see sinners repenting. We pray in the name of Jesus the friend of sinners. Amen.