

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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Train Up a Child – Raising our Children as the Lord Raises His

08 – When it all Goes Wrong

September 19, 2021

Sermon Text: Luke 15:11-32

Scripture Reading: Psalm 51

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

We have been considering this matter of raising up our children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord. We have seen that children, like all of us, are born into this world as sinners in desperate need of being born again. And we saw the role God's Law plays in showing them their need for Christ, God's holiness, and their own sin. We looked at the crucial need for the discipline of the Lord to be applied out of love, even when that discipline is painful. And we have emphasized that

parents and children must, above all else, be born again.

But as we have also seen, parents and children are not always born again. This business of raising up our children does not always lead to a happy ending in this present life. That is to say, there are parents who are wicked, and there are children who – in spite of being raised in a godly manner by godly parents – are ungodly and who choose to reject Christ. This is the subject we want to consider this morning.

I know that numbers of you listening have experienced the grief of this very thing. It is, sadly, rather common. I know parents who are genuine Christians, who raised their children up in Christ, and yet one or more of those children have become their enemies. It is an excruciatingly painful thing, but it is not uncommon and these situations require great wisdom and faith. One common scenario in this regard is a son or daughter choosing a relationship with a wicked person who then further alienates them from their mother and father. This has happened to numbers of

you and you do not even get to see your child or grandchildren anymore.

The book of Proverbs speaks to these situations several times, and not just in some factual, cold manner but in a way that empathizes with the grief of mother or father. Here are some examples:

Pro 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.

Pro 15:20 A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish man despises his mother.

Pro 17:21 He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy.

Pro 17:25 A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.

Pro 19:26 He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach.

Pro 30:17 The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures.

Sorrow, joylessness, bitterness, shame – very intense words. They describe

real pain on the part of a mother or father whose child is –

- Foolish
- Violent
- Mocking
- Scorning

This is all the result of course of the fall and sin entering into the world, infecting every human relationship to one degree or another. Even the closest of relationships such as a mother/father and child. Sin is not just a factual doctrine written in our confessions of faith to be discussed academically. Sin destroys. Sin is the ultimate pandemic that is ALWAYS fatal if the certain, never-failing remedy is rejected.

Have you ever given much thought to Cain and Abel? This is a very helpful and instructive record which, I think, can encourage moms and dads in some important ways –

Gen 4:1-8 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.” (2) And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground. (3) In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, (4) and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock

and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, (5) but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. (6) The LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? (7) If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.” (8) Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.

So here we have two sons. Same parents. Very close to the time of Eden – they would have heard all about it straight from Adam and Eve. And yet, one was godly and the other murderously evil. We have the explanation in the New Testament:

Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.

1Jn 3:12 We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.

Cain was of the evil one. Abel walked by faith and was of God. Light and darkness.

Let's consider still another family where we see a very similar scenario being played out:

Luk 15:11-32 And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. (12) And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. (13) Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

(14) And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. (15) So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. (16) And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

(17) “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! (18) I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. (19) I

am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”

(20) And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. (21) And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

(22) But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. (23) And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. (24) For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

(25) “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. (26) And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. (27) And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’

(28) But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, (29) but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served

you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. (30) But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

(31) And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. (32) It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

Now, to properly understand this parable, we need to realize that this chapter is about *lost things*. A lost sheep. A lost coin. A lost son. And it is about God’s attitude toward *sinners who genuinely repent*. You see it here:

Luk 15:1-10 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. (2) And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

(3) So he told them this parable: (4) “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? (5) And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders,

rejoicing. (6) And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’

(7) **Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

(8) “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? (9) And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ (10) Just so, I tell you, **there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.**”

And so we have in this Prodigal son parable, another example of this very thing – *joy on God’s part when a sinner repents*. And it is taught against a setting in which you have these self-righteous Pharisees and scribes – the ones “who needed no repentance” – criticizing Jesus for mixing it up with sinners.

I don’t know if any Prodigals will ever listen to this sermon, but if I could I would tell them that God rejoices when

a sinner repents. It is God’s desire that they repent. And that if they genuinely repent (as seen in these Scriptures), He will joyfully receive them and forgive them and apply Christ’s righteousness to them.

This week I saw a church sign and as usual it was teaching error. In this case, a kind of half-error. It said this:

It is never too late to say you are sorry.

Well, you see the problem with this. It is stated as an absolute, but in fact the Bible is plain that the time comes *when it is too late*. It is too late to say sorry when:

- A person dies and stands before God
- When a person has so long and so often rejected God’s call to repentance that God is finished calling
- And I believe I should add this – it is too late to say sorry when the wrong done to someone is so prolonged and so grievous and so cruel that approaching them in any way is damaging to them.

1Jn 5:16-17 If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do

not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. (17) All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.

Mat 12:32 And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

However, we see in the Bible – as here in this Prodigal son account – that God desires all sinners to repent. And that whenever a sinner repents, there is joy in heaven. Let's look further into this parable of the Prodigal then:

Luk 15:11-13 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. (12) And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. (13) Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

This son's sin was very great. He was not the eldest son and that had implications about inheritance I am sure. I suspect that in even making this request the son was committing great

sin and showing terrible disrespect and ingratitude to his father. You see in his sin also this element of *entitlement*. "Give me the property that is coming to me." When in fact the father did not have to give him anything at all. This is a terrible aspect of sin – this *entitlement* attitude. We are surrounded by people infected with it today. "What you have earned and what you have, is mine! I deserve it."

And so the father, who represents God the Father, gives him what he does not deserve. We see in this the grace and generosity of God to all people – giving them blessings that they do not deserve.

NOTE: This requires wisdom. We need to be cautious about deriving specific universal principles from a parable. It would not be wise, for example, to use this parable as justification for giving a wicked child anything they ask for. I have seen that error in action and it is not pretty. All that happens in such cases is that the wicked child's sin is enabled and financed.

Now, what does this Prodigal do? *He squandered his property in reckless living*. All that his father had given him, all that his father had worked and worked and worked to earn, was now wasted. The NASB translates it "loose living," and later in the parable the

older son will say that his brother wasted the money on prostitutes.

This was incredibly evil in so many ways. No regard for his father at all. Self, self, self. And did you notice that phrase “a far country”? He willfully left his father and went as far away as he could. He put as much distance as possible between him and his father. I see this happen frequently today. Some of you godly parents have experienced it. [NOTE: We will need to deal with the case of wicked parents later. In that case, a son or daughter putting distance between them is a wise thing to do!].

Now, let's take careful notice here. You will observe what the father did not do. *He did not run to rescue his son. He did not transfer more funds into the boy's account. He let him go on his course.* This is a hard point to stick to, but it is one of vital importance. The prodigal needs to have the full weight and consequences of his or her sin come down upon them. And we see it happening here:

Luk 15:14-16 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. (15) "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. (16) "And he would have gladly filled his stomach

with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

Here the Prodigal learns just what the world will do in return. What the devil's payday looks like. The son had invested all that he had in the world, and now the world abandons him when his money runs out. He is on his own. If you read the biography of John Newton, you will find that he is an excellent example of the Prodigal in the pig pen – Newton became a slave of slaves in Africa.

Once again I would like to speak to Prodigals if I could. *Don't be fooled. The world you are chasing after is no friend of yours. The world and worldlings and the devil only take and take and take and in the end will cast you away onto a garbage heap and no one will help you. In addition, beware. MOST who go the way of the Prodigal never return. They die in their sins in the pig pen. Don't you be one of them. Repent now and turn from your sins and Christ will receive you.*

As we see sin and evil increasing in our world today, we see more and more prodigals in the pig pen. How many of them might have been raised by godly parents even? What are their stories? How many parents have been deeply grieved by prodigals who chose the world instead of Christ? These

prodigals sink into the depths of misery – here you have a Jewish young man feeding pigs! He is lower than a pig! They are eating better than he is! But the blinding power of sin is such that most sinners in even this low estate *will not repent. They would rather be in the pig pen than confess their sin, own the blame that is theirs, humble themselves, and repent.*

And therefore here is the account of a rare miracle. Real salvation is rare. The way is narrow and few find it. Few come back from the path this young man took.

Luk 15:17-19 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! (18) 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; (19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"

When he came to his senses, or when he came to himself. It was a kind of awakening.

Eph 5:14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Listen to Matthew Henry on this:

A sinful state is a state of *madness* and *frenzy*. This is intimated in that expression ([Luk 15:17](#)), *when he came to himself*, which intimates that he had been *beside himself*. Surely he was so when he left his father's house, and much more so when he joined himself to the citizen of that country. *Madness* is said to be *in the heart* of sinners, [Ecc 9:3](#). Satan has got possession of the soul; and how raging mad was he that was possessed by Legion! Sinners, like those that are *mad*, destroy themselves with *foolish lusts*, and yet at the same time deceive themselves with *foolish hopes*; and they are, of all diseased persons, most enemies to their own cure.

Choosing the way of sin instead of Christ is madness and insanity. You see it in most people. They are all fearful and focused on the pandemic currently with us, intensely interested in a cure, but if you try to tell them about a pandemic so lethal that it kills the body and soul for eternity without fail, infecting every single person who ever lived, and that there is a vaccine for it that is 100% successful, they aren't interested. This is the insanity of sin.

2Co 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are

perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

If you are in Christ today it is only because at some point He resolved to shine His Light upon your mind, heal you, and bring you to your senses. In some sense we were all demon possessed in that Satan had blinded our mind's eye ability to see the brightness and glory of Christ.

That is what happened to this young man in the pig pen.

Now, parents of prodigals – *he came to his senses in the pig pen. He came into his right mind in the far country. At the very bottom of life's rung. And has hard as it is for a mom or dad to see their son or daughter in such a place, it is a great error and a quenching of the Holy Spirit to rescue them. Until they come to their senses, you will only be assisting them in moving from one pig pen to another.*

Consider carefully now the nature of true repentance. This is about as clear of a picture of it to be found in the Bible:

(18) 'I will get up and go to my father,

and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; (19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."

And that is exactly what he did say to his father. And I want you to notice carefully something else he said – *I have sinned against heaven*. By this, he means to say, *I have sinned against God*. Real repentance goes further than admitting that the sinner has wronged another person, it is a confession of sin against God. Because all sin is ultimately sin against God. It is HIS Law that is broken. Look now how God responds to real repentance:

Luk 15:20-24 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. (21) And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' (22) But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. (23) And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. (24) For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

This is God the Father's response to every one of His children who repent. He brings the dead to life, embraces them as His child, and throws a feast in heaven.

But notice, do not miss this – all of this only happens where there is real repentance as seen in the Prodigal. Without it, the sinner's world remains the pig pen and he remains alienated from God. There he or she must stay until they come to their senses and repent.

Now, I want to wait until next time to consider the older son's response. In the parable he represents the Jews – like those scribes and Pharisees who hated any idea of Gentiles being included in God's kingdom.

Here we have true repentance, but very very often today what we see is a father or mother throwing the celebration for the Prodigal *when repentance has never occurred*. And I want to show you the kind of damage this does to everyone connected with the evil person. We must be wise, like the father of the Prodigal was wise.