

## Stories of Grace and Truth

Luke 15.11-32

January 28, 2024

“Whoever has ears to hear, let them listen.” The parables of Jesus are meant to be pondered, processed, and practiced. Our parable this week is one that is familiar to many, even those who aren’t Bible readers, so don’t just jump straight in; ask the creator of it to give you insight that will affect the way you live.

Pastor Eric

### Opening Up:

Have you gleaned anything fresh in our new study of Jesus’ parables? Has this study born any new fruit in you?

Read Luke 15.11-16. Personally, which is the most intriguing of the three characters in this parable? On some level, can you identify with being a prodigal? Consider *briefly* and *appropriately* sharing your prodigal journey with your Life Group. Considering Jesus story, what do you imagine drove the younger son to want to take his inheritance and leave? Was his turnaround heartfelt genuine repentance or just an emergency fix?

Read Luke 15.17-24. What is the father like? Identify the various words and phrases that depict him. Did he respond to his younger son the way you think a good father should have? Describe what you imagine was the difference between his relationship with his elder son and his younger son. Read Luke 15.25-32. What was the elder brother like? Why was he so angry at the return of his brother? Do you think the elder son had a valid perspective? If the elder brother’s heart truly reflected his father’s, how would this story have ended; what would the elder brother have done at his younger brother’s return?

“This chapter is the most forceful description that exists of God seeking sinners and reveling in their return.”

Klyne Snodgrass

Note Luke 5.32 and consider how this parable is an illustration of that verse. What is Jesus’ point in this parable? Do the first couple of verses in Luke 15 help you understand the purpose of this parable? How do the first two parables in the chapter help you understand this one? How are Christians sometimes like the elder brother? How would a Christian who truly shares God’s heart react to those who are estranged from God? How might I act toward “the lost” if I more fully reflected the heart of the heavenly Father?

“A person who cannot wholeheartedly rejoice with God when the icy crust about a torpid, empty heart begins to thaw, a person who is not himself inflamed by the glowing love of Jesus for the erring and the lost and is not impelled to rescue human souls – that person is alienating himself from God in a very subtle but dreadful way, no matter how consciously and determinedly he continues to dwell with him, even though he prays and reads the Bible and goes to church.”

Helmut Thielicke

What causes someone to become an *elder son*? What should the Christian watch out for to avoid falling into that trap? This parable reflects issues of the heart. How would you describe the heart of God toward the lost? What can one do to draw closer to the heart of the father? Pray for your attitude toward the lost, mentioning some by name. Make sure to ask God what role you play in bringing God’s love to them. Make a commitment to pray for a heart that’s more like the Father’s.