

Session 3

CANCELLED

The Older Brother

Luke 15:25-32

As we mentioned in the last session, Luke 15 is about celebrating what was lost and has been found. The prodigal son story includes a wayward son and a forgiving Father. But it also includes an older brother, who by behavior and attitude, appears to be lost as well. In many respects his lostness is covered up by a guise of obedience, achievement, and duty. He displays all the markers of a put-together person. He works hard. He makes a profit. He is a model citizen. He has more plusses than minuses in his life. And yet, the father is concerned about this son as well. By the end of the narrative, the father is begging the older brother to come into the party and restore relationship with the younger brother. And yet, the older brother remains on the outside...

Have you ever met someone who does the right things for the wrong reasons? Have you ever been this kind of person? Have you ever had this kind of person in your family?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT:

Read Luke 15:25-32. Briefly summarize the story in your own words.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

The Older Son (Luke 15:11-16)

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So 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. ²⁹ But 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. ³⁰ But 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. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

The older son is a hardworking soul, faithful to his father. He toiled in the fields, never straying from the path. Yet, as he nears home, a strange sound fills the air: music and laughter. Confusion turns to anger as he learns the reason – his lost brother, the one who squandered his inheritance, has returned.

The older brother's heart boils. He feels a deep sense of injustice. All these years of obedience, and never a celebration. Yet, the father throws open the doors, not just for the returning son, but for a joyous feast.

The key idea that the older son misses is this: *this story is not about comparing ourselves to others. It's about understanding the depth of God's love.* The father, in his infinite compassion, doesn't diminish the older son's faithfulness. He reminds him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours." This love is not limited, not conditional. It extends to the lost, the wayward, and yes, even to the faithful who may feel a pang of jealousy.

Similarly, the celebration isn't meant to diminish the older son's worth. It's a celebration of a soul found and a life restored. It's a reminder that God's joy knows no bounds when a lost sheep returns to the fold.

While many of his priorities are exemplary, the older son does not demonstrate one key virtue: he does not come to the Father. What do you think the older son can teach us about prayer?

RUNNING AWAY: How does the story of Jonah compare to that of the Older Son?

Jonah 1:1-3

Despite his pouting and resistance, the Father extends grace by way of an invitation to come to the party. What do you make of the father's choice to extend grace to this son?

2/3 INHERITANCE.

When the Father divided his property in verse 12, he gave it ALL away. In this time, the older son would have received twice the amount of any younger sons. This means that the older son received 2/3 of the inheritance while the younger son received 1/3.

Therefore, when the Father turns to the older son in verse 31 and tells him, "All that I have is yours," he is reminding the older son that this party and the extravagant meal was paid for using the older son's money. It was prepared by the older son's servant staff. It was housed in the older son's tent.

The older son was likely upset both at the actions of the younger brother but also by the actions of the Father. The Father was spending his inheritance on the younger brother. It was no longer 2/3 and 1/3. It was inching closer to being half and half. The older son likely felt like this arrangement was unfair.

Has there ever been a time when someone misspent your own money on something that you deemed to be wasteful?

ONE BIG IDEA

- If God is the giver of all gifts, then all of our gifts remains God's gifts.
- Grace is terrible math.
- No matter what happens in life, we must come to the Father in prayer.

Is there anything in your life that you are holding onto that needs to be given back to God?

Is there anything presently keeping you from coming to the Father?

Has there been a time when you were the older son who is staying away from the father?

Prayer Needs
