

The Heart of God

by Les Wheeldon

The sermon explores the heart of God, who is seeking and saving the lost, and highlights the importance of perseverance, repentance, and full surrender to receive His love and acceptance.

Duration: 1:22:29

Scripture: Luke 15:1

Topics: "Heart Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the parable of the prodigal son. He emphasizes the importance of approaching the word of God with full consciousness and responding to the grace that has been given to us. The preacher describes the younger son's cry to his father, asking for his inheritance, as a cry for more and more, never being satisfied. The preacher also highlights the son's journey away from God, wasting his substance with loose living and ultimately reaching a point of great need. However, the sermon ends on a hopeful note, emphasizing that when the son returns to his father, there is great celebration because he was once lost but is now found.

Transcript

I'd like to turn you to Luke's Gospel and Chapter Fifteen, a well-known and I'm sure well-loved chapter. Somebody leaned over and whispered to me while Dave Wellerly was preaching and said, you've got to follow this. I don't know whether they meant I have to preach in the same style.

But I think when I heard Dave preach this morning, sometimes when he told some of the stories, I don't know all the people's names. Some of you know them and are familiar with them. But when I did know what he was talking about, in just a few sentences he described what is sometimes a great miracle, the man Jürgen.

He mentioned in Germany. I know that he poured out his heart in visiting, praying for him. It wasn't just a few minutes and it happened.

It was a great, long-term, outpoured love to that man. And when he prayed that prayer, Lord I'll go if you convert this man, it was quite a thing and a wonderful thing. Praise God.

And the proof that praying is in the end what will be more effective than anything else that we do. Praise God. Now I want to read Luke's Gospel, Chapter Fifteen and I'll read the whole chapter.

You'll know that in this chapter there are three parables. There's actually a fourth which we will not read in Chapter Sixteen, not quite connected but in the same flow of truth. If you look to Chapter Sixteen, it says there that he said also to his disciples.

And so he applied the truth that he was speaking further on to his own disciples. But I'm going to read only Chapter Fifteen from Verse One, right to the end of the chapter. Let's read.

Then drew near to him all the publicans, the tax collectors, and the sinners, in order to hear what he had to say. They wanted to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

And he spoke this parable to them, saying, Watch man of you having a hundred sheep. If he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it. And where he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing.

And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say to you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents more than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, does not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it.

And when she has found it, she calls her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise I say to you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents. And he said a certain man had two sons.

The younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided to them his living. Not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country.

And there wasted his substance with loose living, riotous living, it says here. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him to his fields to feed swine.

And he longed to fill his belly with the husks that the swine were eating. And no man shared anything with him, no man gave him anything. And when he came to himself, or when he came to his senses, he said, How many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger.

I will arise and go to my father and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father, but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion and rushing to him, fell on his neck and ardently kissed him.

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and I am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring out the best, the best robe, put it on him, put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, bring here the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and rejoice, for this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found, and they began to be married.

Now his eldest son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing, and he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And the servant said to

him, Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has received him safe and sound. And he was angry and would not go in to the father's house.

Therefore came his father out and pleaded with him. And he answered his father saying, Lo, these many years do I slave for you. Neither transgressed I at any time your commandment, and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friend.

But as soon as this your son has come, who has devoured your living with prostitutes, you have killed for him the fatted calf. And the father said to him, Child, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.

It's wonderful, isn't it? It's wonderful also to know that this is the heart of God. This chapter expresses to us the heart of God, and if we want to know what God is like, sometimes it's in looking at chapters like these that we see the Lord expressing as clearly and directly as He can exactly what God is like. Now you'll notice that there are three parables, and I want to point out to you that the three parables are actually intertwined.

They're all actually one story told from different angles, and I want to point this out to you to show you how it all fits together in different ways. The first parable is about the Son, the Son of God, seeking the lost sheep. The second parable is about the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

And the third parable is about the Father and the work of the Father in salvation. And as we can see, we'll see that all three are always working together in everything that God does. So it is not possible to receive a work from one of them independent of the other.

They always work as a team, as a close team. And the other thing we can see is the intertwining of these parables is that the first parable is about a lost sheep, and that's about the first son in the third parable, what we call the prodigal son, that the lost sheep is the prodigal son. And then we find in the second parable, which is the parable of the lost coin, we find that it's really the parable of the second son in that last parable.

All right, I hope you've understood that. There's a bit of first and second, but there you go. I hope you've understood it.

We'll point it out a little bit more as we look at it now. But let's look at this first parable then. And you'll see that this is the parable of the lost sheep.

And immediately we have this notion of being lost brought to our attention, being lost. And this is a... it doesn't tell us how the sheep was lost. You could turn and look at the parable of the prodigal son.

If you turn and look at him for a moment, you could see immediately that there was something deliberate about that prodigal son, something calculating. Maybe not calculating in the full consciousness of what he was doing, but there was something working in his heart that he was going to fulfil a plan, something he wanted to do, a desire, or it could be called a lust. Peter said in his letter, he said, make no room for the fulfilment of carnal lust.

Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust of. Don't keep a door open to do something that you're longing secretly to do that is wrong. Don't do that.

And it doesn't say whether he consciously knew what he was planning, but in his activity he kept something in his heart that he wanted to do and certain steps that he wanted to take. But in this first parable, it's this sheep that was lost and went away, and went away over the hills, wherever it went. It went into the wilderness, went into a desert place, a dry place, and immediately you can see that being lost is a condition that you can see when the person does not know where it is.

Now it's very hard to get very lost in England. I mean, if you've got a good map, and even if you haven't got a good map, if you lose your way, you just ask somebody and you get the information and so it goes on. I remember once being lost in Cameroon and I asked a man, I said, can you tell me the road to this particular house? It was in a forest and roads everywhere and I was trying to be directed to a missionary's house and he said, you go so, you go so, you go far inside so, then you go so, and then you go so, and he said, there you are.

So I replied, I said, do you mean if you go so, then so, and then far, far inside so, that I will reach there? He said, yes. And I hadn't understood a word, but there you go. But I got there.

But it's hard to be lost in England in that sense that there's people to ask. To be lost is something that we don't fully understand. We can understand the panic of a child that's lost its parents in a supermarket or somewhere.

The panic that comes when the way is now, there's now no way out. There is complete ignorance. Lost.

And this is a description of the condition of men. They are lost. And here's something that is very clear.

Men are born lost. They are born not knowing the way. They are ignorant.

They are born with the nature of sin, as we've heard, and they are born lost. They are born wandering in a wilderness. Wherever it is, they're born lost and seeking to find some way, not even knowing that there's a way to God.

And you can see all kinds of ways that men have sought to find God. Idols and temples, the world's full of them. Different ways that men have sought to find a way.

But men, they all only prove how lost man is. And then we have this lost sheep out there, completely helpless, unable to find its way back. And this is the condition of men.

They are unable to find their way back. Men cannot find it by themselves. As you may remember what the eunuch said, how shall I tell what it means unless someone show me? There must be someone to show me.

And so then we have the shepherd, who then goes out and leaves the 99, says he, left the 99 and went after that which is lost. And his heart went out, and he went out into the wilderness, and it doesn't say how long he was prepared to go on his journey to seek this lost sheep. It doesn't say how long he went for looking for this sheep.

But he went into the wilderness. Now if you know anything about this, you will know that it's the heat, the pain, the suffering. We could think of going into, we read the word wilderness, but we must understand it in the sense that a hostile place, difficult road, hard.

And there you have the way of the Saviour, that's the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save that which is lost. That was his mission, to come to this world, to seek and to save that which is lost. And in some measure, whether it's a great measure in the beginning or a small measure, there must at some point come some desire to be identified with that mission, and will of the Saviour to seek and to save that which is lost, and to have a sense of the value of what is lost.

Because the sheep is lost, it doesn't know where to go. It begins to panic, or it may grow troubled, or it may not even know how lost it is. Sometimes it's in utter ignorance.

Some people don't know the abyss of darkness they're in. Some people aren't aware of the danger they're living in. But the shepherd knew.

And the shepherd had the sense of loss, because it's one thing to be lost, it's the other side to have lost something, to have lost someone. And so then we have this truth that he went there day after day and persisted. And here we have, if you like, if I can give a number of words, one of the, if I can call it the method of seeking the lost which is in this chapter, you could pick out a few words, perhaps not words written in the chapter in so many words, but pick out the methods by which the lost are reached in this chapter.

You could pick out these words. One of the words is perseverance. Another word that's in the chapter is diligence.

Another word would be patience. And, of course, they could all be summed up with the word love. Something burning in the heart of God to go out and to seek and to save that which is lost, and to feel intensely that sense of loss, I've lost something.

And that which is lost becomes to you, if it's yours, that which is most precious. I remember my children losing a little glass tortoise. Little glass, I think they bought it for one penny from one of these jungle sales.

They bought it for one penny, or ten pence, and they played with this little glass tortoise for hours. And it was the centre of all their games. And they lost it.

And they searched the whole house. They searched the whole house and they went through everything and of course it wasn't found. And then every week the question would come up, I don't know how many months, what happened to the tortoise, the little glass tortoise? Nothing, no value.

But to them the value was increasing with the sense of loss. And then, the good news is, one day it was found. And then the joy knew no bounds.

It was as if you could have bought them anything. It wouldn't have been equal to finding that little tortoise. You understand, it's the sense of that which is lost, that which is so precious.

And there's something about the soul, your soul, something about your soul which is so precious to God. And when we speak of being lost we could say, well is it lost in the sense that God can't find it? Can God not find a person? Can God not find out where you are? Doesn't God know where you are? But God has not found you until He has placed you on His shoulders. God has not found you until He has drawn your attention to Him, till He's got your attention, till He has spoken His word to you, and till you have given Him the response.

A soul is found when, and this is verse 7, when that soul repents. No soul is found until it repents. Your soul is lost at this moment unless you have found repentance and a place of repentance.

That is the moment at which Jesus Christ says, I've found that person. And that's the moment at which that person says, I'm found. I was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.

And so that's that first parable, and there we have the questing, persisting, suffering Saviour going on out after that which is lost. You won't see Him in the third parable, the parable of the prodigal. You won't see Him there because He's not, He's not the major figure in the third parable, but He's there.

And you'll see Him in the third parable working through different things that happened to that prodigal son, different things that worked to bring that person through to the point of repentance. You know that when you read in that third parable, the story of a famine came. Well, there's the working of the son, if you like, people who came across his life, if there were such, didn't include it in the parable, but people who on his path loved him.

And so we turn then to this second parable. And in the second parable, it's a different position now because in the second parable there is no distance in terms of a far country. Rather, this is very close to home.

In fact, it's in the house. This is from verse 8 onwards, this is the work of the Holy Spirit, this is the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. This is to search the inside of the house because here's a coin that was lost in the house.

And here's the truth that a soul can be lost in the house of God, in the church, if I can put it that way. And then we find the work of the Holy Spirit being brought out. Of course, also lost not only in the sense of being lost in the church, lost in the, having lost one's way in the church, having lost one's way in one's Christian walk, having lost one's way somehow having been familiar with Christian things.

But here it is in this second parable, being lost now and also lost in this sense, being lost within one's own house. The fact that one is not just lost out there in the world, in places, remote places of sin and darkness, but also lost in the realm of one's own heart and mind. So one is no longer aware of where to trust.

You find people sometimes who don't know how to believe in Scripture. They don't know which Scripture to take for themselves, which to take for others. Lost, uncertain, without peace, without assurance, lost in the house.

And when we find in verse 8, we find that the woman, who is a picture of the Holy Ghost, she lights the candle. She lights the candle and the light immediately illumines the house. And then she takes the brush and she sweeps the house, and she sweeps the house all through, and she gathers together there into a corner, into a place.

All the dust of the house is brought together into one place. And then, there's all the dust, and then she reaches down her hand and feels through the dust of the house. The Holy Spirit searches out the things that have gone wrong in the life, brings it all together into a dusty, sometimes filthy, dirty heap.

And there comes the finger of God down, and fingers, and touches the dust of the life, and handles the things that have gone wrong. And then, in that moment, through the dust, God is able to bring a total

response. And again, notice this in this second parable, that the point of being found is the point of repentance.

The soul is found of God by repentance. And so God will also find you when he's talked to you, spoken to you, searched you, lit a light, he's swept through your house, he's pointed things out, and they've been drawn to your attention, and everything's coming into view, and it's there. But you're not found.

You're not found until you suddenly realize what it's all about. Suddenly you see what's gone wrong. Suddenly you see that something so precious about your life has gone missing.

It's lost. It's lost in a heap of dust. And when you see it, and when you, you realize all that's gone wrong, when you then repent, when at that moment you repent, suddenly he's found you, and you're no longer lost.

And something happens in the soul at that moment, when God finds a soul that is lost. Now, of course, there is a moment, a very critical moment at this particular moment when the soul is found, or at least is spoken to, and the light is lit, and the sweeping has gone on, and the saviour has found his sheep, and it's all done, it's all in place. And then he comes and says, now.

And then comes the moment when that life is no longer lost. You can no longer describe that life as lost, but you must describe it now as in a transition between being found and being hardened, being persistent, refusing to follow the grace that has come. And we're going to see this in this third parable, because there is a moment when the grace that comes to you must be fully received in full repentance, with all your heart.

Repentance, as we shall see, cannot be done casually. It cannot be brushed over as something light. It must be done with full consciousness, with all the heart, responding fully to the grace that has come to us.

And so we turn to the third parable. And here we see, in a few moments, we find in this verse 12, the younger of the two sons said to his father, father, give me, covering up his secret plan, which is about to be revealed when he's got what he wants, but he says, father, give to me that which falls to me. Now, this is the cry, I suppose, that comes, give to me.

One of the Proverbs, isn't it, is that which says, give, give, and he's never satisfied. Many things, a number of things described that are never satisfied. One of them is the grave.

But give, give, give me. And so God, or here in this picture, the father, the generous father, the generous heart, giving, moving, outpouring, generous, not recognized as generous, not recognized as loving and kind. You know that when something goes wrong, it's interesting when there's a disaster or something goes wrong or something, immediately people say, why didn't God stop that? Why didn't God do this? Why didn't God do that? Immediately the complaint.

But the thought is never, it never, can never be expressed, well, praise God for stopping all these things, because if we knew what he'd stopped, we would, it would have happened. You understand what I'm saying? You can't know what God has stopped from happening. We only know the one or two things, and I believe there's a very few things compared to what would happen if God did not stop the sin of the human heart running right in the world.

I believe we would be facing horror after horror after horror every day. And now and again there's some horror, and men still don't wake up and say, look, there's something radically wrong with the human heart. They say, why did God allow it? Why did God? God is not recognized for what he is.

He's generous, he's loving, he's watchful over mankind with a loving eye. And so we find that he gave, he divided to his sons his living, he divided what he had. And then we read that not many days after the plan was fulfilled, the plan had come to light now.

It was only a matter of days, and the youngest son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country. And here's a state of heart that is determined to go far from God, as far as it can go. And it tells us that into that far journey he wasted his substance.

You know that your substance is your personality, your character, what you are, what is actually making you the precious person that you are, your mind, your will, your ability to concentrate, your ability to love, all these are your real substance. The things you possess are not your real substance. The man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

A man's life is only measured in what he contains within his heart. But he wasted his substance with loose living. And the word there, righteous living, I think it's better translated loose, because it's a strange word there in the Greek, and it's a word that means loosened, or free from, or away from salvation.

Strange word, but we can best describe it in English by loose. Loosened from righteousness, loosened from that which is right, loosened, cut free from God, cut free from his standards, cut free from his church, cut free, going far away now, as far away as one can go. And then we read in verse 14 that he reached a point when he had spent all, and there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in great need.

And he went and joined himself, now all his circumstances having changed, he joined himself to a citizen of that country who sent him into his fields to feed the swine. And if we were to follow this through, you could see this in terms of a life going down, in terms of persons of this kind of sin, then that kind of sin, and then feeding at the same cost as the evil spirits, as demons. You can see the swine as demons, the unclean spirits with which the soul has fellowship at a certain point reached in sinful behaviour, and a point reached where what you do is no longer really human, but is now in fellowship with a demonic power and force, and probably they'll be unleashed upon that soul powers of darkness, of profanity, of uncleanness, and one could describe them, but that's not our job at this moment.

Simply to note that's what happened, and to see, you could go down that line and see all the darkness into which he came and had fellowship with that place, and there he was beginning to be aware of how lost he was. How awful! When we sometimes see some souls go astray, you know, I think there's some moments when we find it very hard, because we wonder how far it can go, and we see that silver cord that could be broken. You could think, oh Lord, if it breaks at that moment, then you can see that the one who watched over this life was God, that it's God who determines the day of a man's birth, and God who determines the day of a man's death, even if a sinner, though he put himself in great danger, and you'll hear testimonies of people who did unutterably foolish things with their lives, and yet by some strange event, some strange happening, they did not die, but were preserved, and lived, and heard the gospel, and believed, and you can see that it's God who keeps that cord of life beating and going on, and so we find when he was there in that place, he longed to eat swine's food.

You know that the devil wants you to eat the devil's food, and you know that the devil's food is different to man's food in this sense, in which there are things that the devil has no interest in. He has no body. The devil has no body.

He's not interested in overeating. He's not interested in sex. He has no body.

He's not interested in all the food that carnal man eats. He's not interested in those things. He's interested in making men become so enchained to those foods.

He's interested in making men prisoners of their base lusts. He's interested in twisting that which was intended for good, and making men such defiled prisoners of the base nature of man. That's what his plot is, to make men gorge themselves, even on things which are permitted, to make men become only conscious of that which is base.

But that is not the devil's food. The devil's food is a different kind altogether. His food is first something called jealousy, envy.

He feeds on envy. It's his great lustful heart to take what another has. It was his great heart there when he fell, his great, wicked, lusting heart to have what another had.

That's the devil's food. His food is jealousy, pride, envy. These are the things that feed his wicked heart, and that's what he wants to make men feed on, feed the same things in their own hearts.

And so, he was there, sitting at that lowest point. And at the lowest point we find this wonderful moment, when he longs to fill himself. And in verse seventeen it says, When he came to himself, a moment went, a touch from God, a moment's light, a moment's light.

Something a shaft in the darkness, where all the despair could have overwhelmed him and overflowed him and he could have been swept away. In that moment there came a shaft of light. And he saw, he saw first of all, I suppose, what a fool he'd be.

And he saw this. He thought, in my Father's house, he went back to what it was like in Father's house. He began to remember it.

It's a strange thing about this, that what Ron was saying, that in the loins of our father Abraham, you know, in the loins of our father Adam, before he fell, I mean, there's something in us that remembers our Father's house. Something in the human heart that's longing, and in a strange way that longing is never completely destroyed. This longing to go back to that place that I know is there.

My Father's house. And he thought, in my Father's house, he thought there are, there are people who work for money. They don't belong there, they have no rights there, they just do a job of work.

All they do is work there. And he thought, he thought what the treatment was that his father gave to those who work for money. And I have no doubt that this man, like the Proverbs say, he that hath a servant, I forgot exactly what he said, and deals well with him, will have him become a son at the end.

And I've no doubt that this man dealt with his servants in a way that in the end they were like sons to him. And he would have thought back, and yet they were only sons, they were only servants. They did it for money.

And I'm here, and I'm doing this, and this, and this. I know what I'll do. And he begins to repent.

And notice it begins with this, in verse 18, as he's at his lowest point, he's conscious of being at the lowest point. He's aware of it. Then he says this, I will.

Something came into his will, not just into his imagination, not just into a strange kind of longing, but he thought, I will. I will do something. I will arise.

I'll go to my Father. And I will say to him, Father, I have sinned. Now notice this repentance.

I want you to notice very carefully, because remember, it's only the point of repentance in which one can say that a soul is found. And I would say that the majority of problems that persist in Christian lives are because sin is not thoroughly dealt with at the beginning. And so habits of sin recur again, and again, and again, because a soul did not repent of sin at the beginning.

And it's like a treatment, it's like a doctor gives for antibiotics. You take something, you feel a bit better, so you leave it. They've got strains of gonorrhoea in Cameroon that are utterly unsuitable, because the people are given medicine, they take it, they feel a bit better, and away they go.

Leave the rest. But it's like that with repentance. If sin is not thoroughly and utterly repented of at the beginning of the life with God, then there is coming in the life an acceptance, a likeness, an agreement with things that should not be.

And they persist, and will persist, until that heart comes to this point where it says, I have sinned. Now many times we are willing to say, I've made a mistake, or I went a little wrong. Sometimes when people describe how they went wrong, they actually dress it up in a way that makes it sound as if it was really a virtue.

I just overdid things a bit too much, really. I was a bit too generous with something. I worked too hard, or I did this, or I did that.

But in the end what it brought is a watering down of repentance, a weakening of the heart's response. And then you find this. This is his heart, he says, I've sinned against heaven, and against you.

And here's this point. It's what David saw, and David saw it so clearly that he said, I've sinned against you, and then he said, against you only. It proves that when a person sees what sin is doing, he suddenly realises that sin is saying, I want God's purposes to be frustrated in my life.

Sin is saying, I want the devil's purposes to succeed. Sin is saying, I want God's will to be frustrated. I want his plan to be overthrown.

I want his words to be nullified, and weakened, and made void, and of no effect. And when we sin against another soul, it's actually, and this is the worst thing that a God in that soul. It's not what you do in itself alone, it's the effect that that actually has upon that person's relationship with God.

To the realisation that what you're seeing is that you have sinned against God in that person's soul. And this is why sin is so awful, because it is the handing down to another around you of the frustration of God's purposes in the lives of those among whom you live. Now at this point you could say, well it's clear, the man was utterly in darkness and sin, but you're going to come in a moment to the other brother, and we're going to see what he needed to pray.

But just look at this for a moment, let's go on. He said, I am not worthy. He goes on, I've sinned, I've done all this, I see it now.

I am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your high servants, just accept me there. Let me come in and have a place to work and earn my food.

He arose in verse 20, he arose and here's the beauty of the Father. Here's the Father's heart expressed in this verse, he arose and he came to his Father. But when he was yet a great way off, and we cannot measure how far away he was, whether it was like standing on some great hill and noticed a flown figure in the distance, or whether it was, I don't know you can imagine yourself how it was, but all we know is that the Father with his far-reaching gaze saw his son.

And you'll notice this, that in this sense in which we're talking, God sees a soul when it comes to its senses. In that moment he saw, God saw, the Father saw, and this is why we have these three parables, because it's the three working together now, you see, here's the three bringing and escorting this, this prodigal, this wicked, stinking, smelling of the swine, smelling of the swine's food, he comes and he's drawing near with all his shame and all his, he wants to hide his face in shame as he draws near. He's being ushered and brought to the Father.

This is what awaits the returning sinner, this is what awaits the repentant heart, it's the Father. For God is a Father. All that we ever understand by Father is most perfectly fulfilled in our God, he is a Father.

He is one who, as you if you're a father, could not go to bed knowing your children were hungry and knowing it was in your power to put it right. You could not do that as a father. You could not let something happen that you could, you could not do it.

You would provide, you would love. God is a Father. And here it is when his father saw him, he was moved with compassion.

Now the thing is, in these words here we find he was moved with compassion and rushing, he rushed to him. This is the movement of God's heart that God, if you like, God helps himself, he helps us. He's a helpless case.

Now that isn't original to me. I didn't say that, I wasn't the first to say that. The first person I heard say that was Tony Seaton.

If you've never been to Epsom, you ought to come sometime and hear Tony preach. Sometimes he preaches and the other Sunday, about three Sundays ago, he asked me to preach. But before I got up he said, God is a hopeless case.

So we all sat back like this. He said, God's a hopeless case. I said, yes he is, he's a hopeless case.

Only, oh that can only be said in Epsom. I got away with it. I'll leave you at the end believing it's true.

And so we all sat there, yes he's a hopeless case. And he said, yes, Tony said he's in love with you, he's like a young man who's utterly, fully in love. He loves you, he's a hopeless case, he doesn't know what to do with himself.

He's a lover. God is not just a thinker or a philosopher. God is moved with compassion and is a lover.

And here he is, this is the great part, he is the hopeless case, God the hopeless case. If you want to see how hopeless he is, you have to look at Calvary. That's how hopeless he is.

How, this sense in which he could not do any other. This sense in which there was nothing that would move away from that place of pouring himself out. He had to give himself, because his heart went beyond all else and produced a reason that we can never fathom.

And it's truth that we can, we can think about and think about, and still we only guess at the fullness of what it means that Christ died for the ungodly. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. But he has made him to be sin who knew no sin, while we were still rebels.

And there it is, this verse 20, he ran and fell on him and kissed him ardently. And all the smells of all the skins and all the swine and everything was swallowed up in a great odor of love. Because God is a heart that is able to wash and cleanse and purify and make sweet-smelling even the most foul heart.

It's the Father's heart that can do it. You know, there's only one heart that can do this. It's the Father.

That's why Jesus, knowing that he had to bring us to Father, he didn't only want us to bring us to himself, he said, I am the way. I'm bringing you to one that when you come to him, there'll be something in your heart that will be so, so fulfilled in a way that you cannot imagine. But it'll only be when you come to the Father.

Let the Father's heart go right around you and wash it. When will he do it? When you're stinking, when you're smelling, when you're not aware of how far you can go. You probably don't think you can go any distance at all with God.

You probably think that you'll fail halfway. You'll probably think that there'll be some rebuke waiting around the corner, some strict penance to be done or something. But here's the truth, that it's real.

It's true. God, revealing his true heart, he ran, fell on him and kissed him ardently. That's what God will do to every returning sinner in this place tonight.

He makes no exception. He receives everyone who comes to him. Understand? In the midst of this embrace, as it was there and it was all overflowing him and all this, he said, Father, I have sinned.

It was almost as if he was struggling to make this. Perhaps even to assure his own heart, I'm not worthy of sin. I'm not worthy.

But the Father cuts him short. He says, bring out the best. Now what's God's best? What is the best that God can give you? If we ask now, Father, what is there in that place this night? What is there in my very heart? What is there in heaven? Would you give us an angel? Oh no.

Moses said, oh no, I don't want an angel. He said, if an angel gives me all the blessings of God and I see him and he gives me, I don't want him. Leave it in the wilderness if it's an angel.

What's the best that God has? His Son, His Spirit, Himself. Give him the best. Clothe him with the very same nature and life and Spirit that indwells the very Son of God.

Let him be as a same indwelt, loved with the same love, not with a different quality, but with the exact same love. Give him the best. Put on his finger a ring of authority.

But there is no worthiness for authority here. There's no worthiness that this one should order about his servant again. It's not right.

It offends so much. But in the Father's heart it's right. When you see the logic of a father, it's right.

It's only not right if you're not seeing it in the logic of a father in love. Once you've moved from a father's heart, it's all now got to be weighed up and calculated and worked out and earned and this and that. But in the great Father's heart, it's give him.

Give him. Give him the best. Give him the ring.

Give him the robe. Give him sandals. Let him preach.

But he's only been a Christian for a few minutes. Give him sandals to preach the gospel. Give him a place to stand somewhere and witness to others.

Give him a place anywhere where this soul can hear what's happened to this one. And everyone is included. In verse 22, to bring hither the fattest calf.

We're going to have a great celebration. We're going to eat and be merry. Why? Because he was dead.

He was dead. He was lost. That's the definition of being lost.

It's dead. And now he's alive and they began to be merry. And now there it's all going on, this music and this dancing and the rejoicing.

You know that the secret of joy, I'm persuaded in this church, is to hear the sound of a new-born baby. And if that sound is not heard, all those of this, there's nothing can take away the heaviness. Doesn't matter how much praise, how much we get into, because now we're going to look at someone who has never left the house.

Let's look at it. It's the eldest son. And I notice this verse 25.

It really struck me this afternoon reading this. He was in the field. And I thought that, because when I went to Cameroon, the Lord gave me a verse.

It was only a little verse. I may have told you this before, but it was this verse. It said, Arise my beloved, let us go into the field.

That was my call to the mission field, if you like. Arise my beloved, let us go into the field, let us lodge in the villages. All right, let us lodge in the villages.

That was all it was. Arise my beloved. It was just a sense of, I'm loved and I'm being taught, let us go into the field.

And this man was in the field. He was laboring for God. He was working, if you like.

He was a missionary. Or he was a preacher. He was certainly somebody working hard for God in this sense.

He was working, and here he is. And he's coming out of the field. But the strange thing is, he hears sounds from Father's house that he's not heard.

He's not heard this sound from Father's house. If he has, it's a long, long time ago. And he called one of the servants.

It doesn't go to his father. His fellowship is now no longer with God. It's with servants.

Other missionaries, other servants, other Christians. He's fellowshiping now with all those around him. And sometimes if you do that, you may find someone who'll pour something negative in your heart.

If you fellowship only with people and not with God, it won't be long before your heart receives a good dose of something negative. Down you'll go. But here, this servant wasn't negative.

He was positive, and he said this. He said, what's all this? What's happening? What does it mean? He said, your brother's come. Perhaps expecting that the son, the brother would rejoice, your brother's come.

And your father has killed a fatted calf because he receives in faith and so. Isn't it wonderful? And then we see the fallen face. You can see pain, angry.

His face is fallen. You can almost hear the voice, why is your countenance fallen? Why are you depressed? What's the cause of your depression? Many, many causes of depression. It mustn't be too general in the sense that it could.

There are different causes of depression. But one of these great causes of depression is disobedience. Lack of fellowship with God.

Distance from God. And here it is, not caring for his brother. You remember, Cain hasn't brought a sacrifice of the best like his brother.

And he looked at his brother, and he was envious. That's the food of Satan. Well, the food of Satan in the father's house? Well, not really.

But really close to father's house. You understand? He was eating of envy while being in the father's house. You remember that Cain actually was inflamed at the moment of worship.

Do you remember? Cain offered first, he was the first to bring sacrifice. He offered it up, then Abel offered his sacrifice, and God said, I'll accept that, but I can't accept that. And God said, if you do what's right, Cain, I accept you too.

No difference between you, but you've got to do the right thing too. He wouldn't do it. So he began to eat of Satan's food, invisible food, spirit food, right there in father's house.

Your brother is coming, and he was angry. Anger? Strange how when a soul gets angry, what actually caused it. You may say, well, it was that caused me to be angry.

But actually, it was waiting to cause you anger. It wasn't that that caused it, it was that that triggered it, but it wasn't that the cause of it. The same thing could have happened to Jesus Christ and he wouldn't have been angry.

He was angry. Why was he angry? Because his brother had been blessed. Do you remember that this murderous thought came into a man named Esau, who wanted to murder his brother? Do you remember why it was? It was because he said, bless me, you've blessed my brother.

You've blessed him, you've set him before me, you've set him above me. Have you no blessing for me? He lifted up his voice and wept and cried, bless me, bless me, bless me. And he said, got a blessing? Got something that he wasn't satisfied? It didn't satisfy his heart? The blessing that his father gave him didn't really satisfy him? And he devised his plan to kill his brother.

Jacob had to flee. And then we read on in 10, he was angry, would not go in, couldn't go into father's house, couldn't go in. It was something about that place of prayer, that place of rejoicing, that place of purity, that place of worship.

He didn't belong there anymore, but he was working in the field. But he didn't belong in father's house. And then he says this, it gets strange as you look on down, he would not go in, his father came out to him, because the father seeks and seeks that which he lost.

The Holy Ghost sweeps the house. The Holy Ghost searches the coin, because this brother is as precious as the other. He searches out that which is precious, that silver, that gold, that most precious of all that's hidden down there, buried in this envy and anger and jealousy.

He goes out to him and pleads with him. Can God plead with a man? Does God make himself less to men, apparently, than his station really deserves? Yes, he does. God will plead with you.

And so it goes on, and it says this, verse 29, he answering, said to him, Father, for as many years I slaved for you. Years I slaved. I never did I transgress your commandment.

Here's the interesting thing that he said. He said, I've been good. I've been righteous.

I haven't been in sin. I haven't been a prostitute. I haven't done that.

I didn't get drunk. I've been a good son. And you can almost hear the words come pleading from the father, yes my son, you've been a selfish son.

It's an amazing thing when you think that someone can think they can be holy and not love their lost brother. If you think you can be holy and not love your lost brother, then you are completely deceived. You could tell me you've not sinned, you've been righteous, you've been faithful in church attendance, you've done this, you've read this, you've gone through it all.

You could give me all the list of things that this man could have. And I've never transgressed you. I've never done it.

I'm all right, really. Surely I'm all right. You know that the preaching of holiness could, in a wrong heart, make you into the most selfish kind of person that there could be.

Because you could always say, make me right, keep me right. I don't want any more of this. Terrible to happen to me.

I don't want to go to hell. I want to be all right. Let me have a nice corner.

Let it all be all right. Keep me right. And yet, when is it? Do you love? Do you love anyone? Who do you spend yourself on? Is holiness only for you to enjoy God, or for God to enjoy you? Is holiness that God should spend himself on you, or that you should spend yourself on God and on his purpose? And now you see, this is the point that this heart reaches when he's lost.

Oh yes, the second parable told us, he was in the house, but he was in the dust, and he was lost, and he was as lost as the other son. And so we read on down, because it goes on, and there's a tragic point in this particular parable as it goes on. It's this, he said this, you never gave me anything.

When I joined, you didn't answer my prayers, when I prayed for a great thrill or a great feeling in prayer, you didn't answer me, I didn't feel anything. I've not felt anything. You haven't spoken to me, the revelations have been so meagre.

Your power, you haven't given me gifts. You haven't given me that, you haven't given me this. You didn't give me anything.

But I might have fun in our meetings, we wanted wonderful meetings. We wanted great sense of God in our meetings, we wanted to feel really up and away and in worship and carried away, we wanted to be filled with joy, we wanted our churches to be always filled with joy. Would you agree with that? Sounds right.

But if that's all it is, I want to be filled with joy, full stop, what's it about? Why filled with joy? There's only one joy, to do the Father's will. Every other joy will run through your fingers and be lost forever. It'll go, it won't work, your blessings won't last, your gifts won't function.

There's only one persistent lasting joy, to do the Father's will. And so you didn't give me anything, you look at this one, he's come and you've wasted everything on him. Father said to his son, he actually said the word that is child, and I love that little word child because it puts him in his place.

Father only can say it. Child, you're a child. No I'm not.

I've been a missionary for 65 years. How dare you call me a child. You're a child.

Lost your childhood. Child, you're always with me. Everything I have is yours, all at your disposal.

You could almost read now and say, you could have got him. You could have found him. You could have brought him back.

It's right that we should make Mary, and be glad for this, your brother was lost. He was dead and he's alive again, he was lost in his family. And the sad thing about the parable is it ends there.

It doesn't end with this. It could have said this, and then the oldest son turned to the father and said, father, I sit against heaven, and against you, and against my brother, and I am no more worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your hired servants.

Just make me a hired servant. And then the father would have said, come on everybody, come on, there's going to be a wonderful reconciliation here. You know, there's another side to this, that's the side of reconciliation, because you could see there, this brother could never go into father's house again, as long as the younger brother was there.

He was barred. Do you know, if you aren't reconciled with somebody, you're barred from father's house. Or you can change churches, but you can't change father's house.

It's a tragedy, you know, that a person says, I'll go to another church. It's a tragedy, because there shouldn't be another church, should there? There should be such fellowship with all the churches, that everybody should say, we're one. The fact that you can go to another church is itself a great condemnation of our age, and of our fellowship among the churches.

Even some people refer to other churches with an elder brother attitude. future. You do know that if you're going to get back on track, you've got to be reconciled.

But if you're going to be reconciled, you can't say, oh, I've made a mistake. You've got to say, I've sinned. Against Heaven.

And in your sight, something's got to work so deeply in you that you will go on the ground before your brother, where you should be, as nothing. And you'll go to all the humiliation of reconciliation. Because without humiliation, voluntarily, it won't happen.

The tragedy is that some people go through statements of reconciliation, and don't go through the heart of it. And in the end, they remain as distant as before, but they say they're reconciled, and they're not. And ever again, it seems to raise itself.

If this happens, oh, it's there again. Oh, there's something else that works in you. Be ye reconciled, with God first, and then with your brother.

Let's pray. Well, you must repent now. If you're going to repent, you've got to do it now.

There is a speaking that must not be heeded in my house. There is a speaking that you must not hear, and you must not repeat. You must let that one speak alone, isolated in his speaking, to reveal the Spirit quickly by which he has spoken.

For if voice joins with voice, and hand joins with hand, to speak that which is wrong in my house, then there shall be obscurity, and confusion, and darkness. So shut thy ears to that which is wrong, and come to me, and hear that which is right, for thou art exceeding precious in my sight. Thou art lovely unto me, and I will not speak ill of thee.

Neither is it in my heart to speak ill of my people. I do correct, but I do not criticise. So receive my love now, my loving entreaty, and cease to hear that which is wrong, and come into my embrace now, and be cleansed, and washed, and renewed, and strengthened for thy journey.

Amen Father. Father, will God fill you with the Holy Ghost? Will he kill the fatter calf for you? Will he clothe you with the best? You may say you were filled with the Holy Spirit. He'll fill you again.

He'll go after your brother. He'll fill you again. He'll go after your lost brother.

He'll fill you. He'll be filled for his purpose, for the purpose of God. Be filled for God then, not for yourself.

Go on now. You say, make me right for me. Why should he do it? He does it for himself.

And that's the best thing you could ever have. Father, Father, do it now Father. Be glorified in our midst.

Lord, make people right unto this purpose. Lord, you've got a house that is to be filled with love. Lord, that draws the lost, glory to thy name.

Make it tonight again, Father, every half. Glory to thy name, Lord. He'll fill you if you'll repent.

He'll fill you if you'll come. He'll give you joy if you'll align yourself with his purpose. He'll deliver you from the swine, the devil's food you've been eating.

He'll let depression go out of your life if you'll come to him for his purpose. Father, this is your house, Father. Do in it what you will.

Father, we're not waiting for a man to do it. It's your house. Then do it, Father.

Clean it out, Father. Clean it out. Clean out selfishness.

Clean out the misery of self. Father, fill it with the joy of love. Glory.

Cleanse thy temple, Jesus. Fill it with prayer. Prayer for all nations.

Glory to thy name. Prayer not just for us, but for all nations. Lord, Father, cleanse thy temple, Father.

Sweep the house. Light the lights. Glory.

Put your finger on that which is worse. Glory. And give joy.

Give joy, everlasting joy to thy people. Glory. Father, it's yours.

It's yours to have. All that I have is yours. It's all yours.

I'll give more. I don't only give a number of gifts. I'll give as many as will receive them.

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