

No Longer Ashamed

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[0 : 00] Luke chapter 15 verses 11 through 32.

! So the text is Luke chapter 15 verses 11 through 32.! And once you find that place, we like to at our church, you know we stand for things that we honor, we stand for people and things that are important, and we believe that the Word of God is extremely important. So we like to honor the reading of God's Word by standing.

So if you can, I invite you to stand up as I read Luke chapter 15 verses 11 through 32. Jesus is speaking here, and he said, He also said, A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.

So he distributed the assets to them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country where he squandered his estate in foolish living.

After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country who sent him into his field to feed pigs.

[1 : 30] He longed to eat his fill from the carrot pods the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any. When he came to his senses, he said, How many of my father's hired hands have more than enough food?

And here I am dying of hunger. I'll get up, go to my father and say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.

Make me like one of your hired hands. So he got up and he went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion.

He ran through his arms around his neck and kissed him. The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

But the father told his slaves, Quick, bring out the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it and let us celebrate with a feast.

[2 : 30] Because the son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field.

As he came near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he summoned one of the servants and asked what these things meant. Your brother is here, they told him.

And your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him safe and sound. Then he became angry and didn't want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him.

But he replied to his father, Look, I have been slaving many years for you. I have never disobeyed your orders. Yet you have never given me a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him. Son, he said to him, You are always with me and everything I have is yours.

[3 : 35] But we had to celebrate and rejoice because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

Would you please be seated? Growing up in middle school and high school, we had a golden retriever.

And when I was in the ninth grade, I remember, so our dog was probably one or two years old, a big puppy. And I had a Spanish homework. I had a Spanish work seat that I had taken home that was due the next day.

And I left it out in the family room. I don't remember what I was doing, but I just left it out. And I came back and it was in shreds. My dog had literally eaten my homework.

And I thought, what a great dog, right? If I could only teach this dog to do this all the time. And so I remember telling my parents and my mom wrote a note and took the little tore up pieces of my homework and put it in a Ziploc bag for me to take to my teacher the next day.

[4 : 39] But before she did that, she held it up to our dog, Murphy, and said, Did you do this? Did you do this? And if you have dogs, you know that for a lot of them, shame is such a powerful feeling that they feel ashamed for what they've done.

I know at home we have two dogs. And when Danny and I are trying to figure out which one did it, we'll show them the mess or whatever. Did you do this? Did you do this? And when everyone acts more ashamed, we figure that's probably the culprit, right?

That's the guilty party. But all that to say, you know, there are powerful human feelings. Love is an extremely powerful feeling. Fear is an extremely powerful feeling.

But I think one that we don't think about as much, this is an extremely powerful feeling, is the feeling of shame. Shame is a very powerful feeling.

The story of the prodigal son, which I just read to you, is probably the most recognized parable of all the ones that Jesus told. And it's a story that talks a lot about shame.

[5 : 48] In fact, the reason why Jesus began to tell it in the first place was because of the Pharisees and the scribes feeling ashamed of him. If you look in Luke chapter 15, 1 through 2, before Jesus tells this parable, it says there, Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to him, Jesus.

And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners, and he eats with them. And so what's happening here is the Pharisees and the scribes, the religious leaders of Israel, they were ashamed of Jesus.

They were ashamed of him because he would associate himself with tax collectors and sinners. These people, in their mind, these were Satan's people. What is he doing with them?

These are the unsynagogued people. We might refer to them today in the church as the unchurched people. These are people who their sin is clear. They don't even try to hide it. These are the types of people that, as a parent, you might say, I hope my son or daughter doesn't date them or marry them.

These were the kinds of people who are the riffraff of society, the outcasts, the unwanted. Yet Jesus associated with them.

[7 : 03] But he associated with them not because he condoned their lifestyles. He went to them because he knew that they needed to hear the hope that he had to preach, that they would follow him.

He didn't condone their lifestyles, but neither did he condemn them as those who were without hope, like all the religious leaders were. Jesus tells this parable in response to the shame that the Pharisees and the scribes were demonstrating towards him and to those whom they had condemned already as being too sinful for God to love.

And so there's three characters in the story that Jesus tells. There's the younger son who represents the tax collectors and the sinners who would have been there when he first told this parable.

There's the older son who represents the Pharisees and the scribes who were likewise listening to Jesus tell this story for the very first time. And then there's the father.

And in the parable, the father is symbolized by Jesus himself. And in this parable, the lesson we learn from our Lord is this, that Jesus Christ, the son of God, urges the shameful and the shameless to be reconciled to him.

[8 : 27] Jesus Christ, the son of God, urges that the shameful and the shameless be reconciled to him. And so the beginning of the parable starts with the younger son.

Remember, the younger son goes to his father and says to him, The father, give me the share of the property that is coming to me. And the father divided the property and gave it to him.

This was a shameful request from a shameful son to ask. Basically, what he's saying is this, Dad, I can't wait any longer for you to die.

I have plans for what I have coming to me in my inheritance through you. But I can't wait anymore for you to be dead. So give it to me right now.

Now, the Pharisees and the scribes, as they were hearing this story as well, they would have thought not only was that shameful, but the father's response was shameful. They would have

thought the father should have slapped him around.

[9 : 27] What are you talking about? You want me to be dead? Well, I'm going to disinherit you before you can get your hands on anything. But he doesn't do that. He gives his shameful son the request that he asked for.

And what does he do with it? Not many days later, he gathers all that he has, and he goes to a journey to a faraway land. And there he squandered all that he had on reckless living.

And so what he does here, basically, is he liquidates all his assets. He takes the land, he takes the property, and he sells it all and goes away to a faraway country with cold, hard cash in hand.

And it's interesting that Jesus talks about the fact that he went to a faraway country. Those who are listening to him tell this parable knew that what he was talking about is he went to the Gentile lands, the lands that were outside of Israel.

Many of them thought that maybe this was the land outside of even God's being able to see what is going on. And so he goes to a faraway country. Why did he do that? Well, don't we do the same thing?

[10 : 34] Whenever we want to get away with a little bit, unwind, right? Whoever goes to Vegas, whatever happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.

You heard that? Or we have our spring breakers in high school and college. They like to go on spring break to the beaches far away from home. Well, why is that?

Well, the beach is beautiful. Las Vegas, I'm sure, is really nice. There's fun things to do there besides gambling. Or, you know, a lot of people find enjoyment in that. But whatever the case, they go far away to escape accountability.

I'm going to go to these places where nobody knows my name. Nobody knows my family. Nobody knows the people who I work with. Maybe nobody knows the people I go to church with.

And there I'm going to get away with whatever I want because I'll have freedom of being anonymous. And so that's what he does. He goes far away, takes all of the inheritance.

[11 : 37] He wastes it on all kinds of sinful living. And then to compound his problem, a severe famine comes across the land. And he has nothing.

And so what he decides to do is he's got to get a job. So he hired himself out to one of the citizens. And there he was given the job to go and feed pigs, which for a Jew was about as low as you can go.

Because to them, pigs were disgusting, filthy animals. And they are. They are. If you've ever spent time with pigs. But could you imagine when you're a Pharisee and you're a scribe hearing this, thinking, what a shameful son.

And he wants to eat pig food. And I think when they were hearing Jesus said that, they were probably thinking in their minds, good. Good. I'm glad that that is the end of that shameful son's story.

That's what he deserves. To be nothing and no one. To be left behind by his friends. Who were there when he had money. Who were there when the party was happening.

[12 : 38] But once the money was gone, so were his buddies. But you know, the son here in this story, and again, it's just a story.

But in this story, he never says something like, you know, if my dad just wouldn't have answered my request. This situation that I'm in, it's really my dad's fault. If he was a good dad, he wouldn't have let me get away with the inheritance before he died.

He doesn't do that. Why? Because he understands that the situation he is in is a situation of his own creation. And such is the case with us. And we can't look at God for the situation that we put ourselves in where sin leads us to and say, God, it's all your fault.

Because we choose to sin in the ways that we do. And to bear the consequences for what results. James chapter 1 verses 13 through 15 says this.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.

[13 : 47] Then, when it has conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. And so what scripture tells us is what we experience in real life.

That sin is a killer. Sin is instinctive to us. And if you don't believe that, then as I tell our church all the time, go volunteer in the nursery with our little kids.

And they're beautiful and they're precious, but they're little sinners. They know how to be bad. We don't have to teach kids how to be bad. It comes instinctively. We spend most of our time teaching them why they shouldn't be bad and why they should be good. And we do the same as adults. We're just better at hiding it than they are. We entice ourselves to sin. We like to blame other people for, you know, the situation that we're in. [14:52] But if we really were truthful with ourselves, we realize that we entice ourselves. That we're the ones who are truly to blame for our own actions. The younger son's sinful desires left unchecked were carried out in sinful actions that led him to the brink of death.

He was near death. And again, I think the scribes and the Pharisees on hearing it would have thought, Good, that's what he deserves. But the story continues. There Jesus, as he tells it, says that the son came to himself. And he realized, you know, how many of my father's hired hands, they have more than enough to eat. They never starve to death. And so what I'm going to do is I'm going to get up. I'm going to go back to my father. I'm going to say to him, Father, I've sinned against you and before you. I'm no longer to be worthy to be called your son.

But please, at the very least, give me a job that I can pay back from you what I took. And so that's his plan. He arises and he goes back to his father.

[15:56] See, this son, despite he was in the situation he was in, he remembered his father's character. He remembered that my father is a gracious man.

My father is a compassionate person. And he recalled how rich and generous his father had been, not just to his sons, but to his servants, to his workers.

And so, again, here he's hit rock bottom. It can't get any worse than the situation that he was in.

And so he rehearses a confession. This is what I'm going to say.

And I hope, at the very least, when I go back to my dad, he will be just a little bit gracious with me. Because he knew that the way that he was living and the path that he was on would only lead to death.

And that his only chance, his only chance to live would be to go back to his father. And it's interesting when Jesus says there that this son came to himself, what Jesus is talking about there is repentance.

[17:04] It's godly sorrow for the sin that you have committed against God and a resolve to turn away from it. I'm done with that. And it's a message that Jesus consistently preached.

Listen, Jesus was the son of God. And yes, he taught things about how we are to live and to be a good, moralistic person. But it wasn't a salvation by works.

And you can't live that way apart from his saving you. Jesus continually, his message was that people would repent. Look, in Matthew 4, 7, there it says, From that time when Jesus began his earthly ministry, he was preaching, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Luke 5, 32, Jesus says, I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Luke 13, 3, No, I tell you, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Luke 24, 46 through 47, Thus it is written, Jesus said, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations beginning here in Jerusalem.

[18:16] So the younger son, again, his pursuit of pleasure led him to be filled with remorse over the past, pain in his present, and with bleak prospects for a future because he knew he would continue to suffer and die.

And so I ask you today, do you feel that way? Do you feel that way? For those who are out here, maybe you're listening. You're not out here in front of the stage, but do you feel that way? Do you feel that you are without hope? Do you turn on the news and you see all the bad things that are happening in our country, in our world, and you think, this is hopeless.

I'm hopeless. There's no way back from this pit that I've dug myself into. I know I've felt that way.

And I remember being called to ministry when I was 16 and running far and hard away from God to the point where when I was in college and I met my wife, she was afraid to date me because of the bad reputation that I had.

I don't have any idea how far I had sunk. God was gracious to me. And I'm preaching to you because I felt this grace from him.

[19 : 40] And I remember the first time I went back to my home church with fear. They know what I've done. They've heard the stories of the things that I have done. And I'll tell you, some of them I did feel ashamed from them in my coming back, but not all of them.

And for a lot of them, it was just, we're so glad you're here. We love you. More importantly than that, I felt that from my father. And I always want to think, you know, God, I've messed up.

Not only should you not call me to ministry, but you should probably unsave me if that was possible. But time and again, God has been gracious to me. So if you feel like you are without hope, I want you to hear today that God will be gracious to you if you come to him.

So we move on to the next character, which is the father. The son comes back. And what's the father doing? He's been waiting for his son. He's been hoping for the return of his son.

And he sees his son coming from far away. He feels compassion. And he runs to him to embrace him and to kiss him. You see, this father was watching and waiting and he was suffering silently in hopes that one day his son, who wished he was dead, would return to him.

[20 : 58] So that he could be gracious to him and love him. He sees him and he runs to him before anyone else in that village can say anything to him.

Before his son can be heaped with shame and insults. He runs to him so that his son is the first person that he greets. And the first thing that he hears and the first thing that that he feels is an embrace from his father who says, I love you.

And this the Pharisees would have thought, again, the father is acting shamefully. Respectable men do not run. And they don't so easily forgive those who have done so much damage to them.

But this father doesn't make his son sit outside the gates. He doesn't humiliate him. And he doesn't make him pay back what he took by making him work in his fields.

And so the son has to be stunned and he's he's rehearsing his confession. He he's starting to share it. Father, I've sinned against you in heaven. And before he can finish, the father interrupts him and he tells his servants, come quickly, bring the best robe, put it on him.

[22 : 12] Put the ring on his hand, put shoes on his feet. The father is too busy lavishing his sons with gifts that the son can't even get through his confession.

And so he gives him his robe. Now, in this culture, this was the best garment that the father had to wear. He would wear it only on weddings or really special occasions. You got to imagine this son has come back from working with pigs.

He's covered in filth and he stinks. And yet the father wraps his son with the best garment that he has to give to him. He puts a ring on his finger, symbolizing the authority that he is that he is giving to his son, welcoming him back into the family and bestowing upon him again the privileges, the rights and the authority that came with being his son.

And he gives him sandals to wear, demonstrating that this son would not have to work to pay back what he took from his father. The father's not done with his son.

He asks or he orders that the fattened calf be killed and that a celebration be had because the son of his was dead and now he's alive again. He was lost and he was found.

[23 : 23] And so he says, let's celebrate. A fattened calf like that would feed 200 people. That's a pretty big party. He's inviting everybody from the village. Come and let us celebrate the return of my son.

And what were they celebrating? Yes, that the son had returned. But we can't forget that if the father had not chosen to be gracious, there would be no reason to celebrate.

And he didn't have to be gracious to his son. He didn't have to forgive him. The son was the one who had offended him, not the father. But he chooses to be gracious.

And because he chooses to be gracious, there's reason to celebrate. And that celebration there is reflective of the celebration that takes place in heaven when a lost sinner is found.

When they receive that great exchange through Christ, like the father who gives his robe to his son. We are sinful. There is nothing we can do through works or good deeds to earn God's grace.

[24 : 32] Or otherwise it wouldn't be grace anymore. It wouldn't be mercy anymore. But through Christ, the Bible says when we put our faith in him, that we are clothed with Christ's righteousness.

When we ask to be forgiven, when we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are clothed with his righteousness forever.

So when God sees us, the father, he doesn't see someone in the dirty rags of sin that we once wore. But he sees us clothed in the righteous goodness of his own son.

And he calls us his children. And he tells us that we have an inheritance with him in heaven forever. And so therefore we know that we are called as Christians in 2 Corinthians 5, 20 through 21 to be ambassadors for Christ.

That today God makes his appeal through us. And so we implore you who here today on behalf of Christ be reconciled for God. For our sake, he made him, Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin.

[25 : 37] So that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Again, salvation is not based on works but on God's grace. You could never earn your salvation from God.

You repent. You turn to him. And the Bible says he lavishes you with his grace. Grace that forgives. Grace that covers sin completely. Being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, you now in him share his eternal inheritance with him and with all the saints.

In Christ, your past is redeemed. In Christ, your present is worth living. And in Christ, your future is always hopeful. Christ changes everything.

He changes everything. He takes your shame to cover you with his righteousness. And he urges the shameful to come to him. He urges you to come and he says, I will bear your shame.

And he has borne it on the cross. But there's a third character here. The older son. And it seems like such a great place to end the story, doesn't it?

[26 : 47] The younger son comes back home and there's a party. This is all good. But Jesus isn't done with his story. We know the older son was out in the field. As he came near to the house, he heard the sounds of celebrating.

And he was upset. And he doesn't go in. He's indignant that his father would celebrate such a shameful son.

And this older son was ashamed of them both. His younger brother and his father. You see, outwardly, this older son seemed like he was a good person.

But his reaction revealed his hypocrisy. On the outside, he did what was expected. But inwardly, he was filled with secret sins.

Bitterness. Hatred. Jealousy. And anger. Does that describe you? The truth was that he was just as lost as his younger brother was.

[27 : 58] Because he spent most of his life convincing everyone that he was a good person with good morals and good values. And he thought highly of himself. And that kept him from seeing his own shamefulness.

He felt he was shameless. But you must understand this. That heaven never holds a party for a self-righteous person. The older son acted as if he was without shame.

But his refusal to celebrate his father's grace revealed his true nature. That though he lived in close proximity to the father, he didn't possess his character.

He didn't really know his dad. So this gracious father says to his older son, Son, you are always with me. All that I have is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad for this brother was dead and is alive.

He was lost and is found. And with that, Jesus' parable comes to an abrupt ending. It comes to an abrupt ending.

[29 : 03] And we're left to wonder, well, what does the older brother do? Does he go and celebrate? Or does he continue to throw a pity party for himself? Don't you hate whenever a story doesn't have closure?

We were talking about that earlier with Paul and Nick about the Hobbit movies. And when Smog emerges from his cave and he's about to go torch the town and then the movie ends.

We think, well, what? Now we've got to wait a year to find out what's going to happen next. If you've read the book, you already knew. But we hate that, don't we? We want closure. But remember, Jesus' stories had a point.

They weren't to entertain. They were to teach. And he was chiefly teaching the Pharisees and the scribes who acted as if they were without shame. And so Jesus ends this story with an open ending.

Because they are the older brother. But I think if they would have demanded from Jesus to know what the ending was, I think this is what Jesus would have said to them.

[30 : 06] The ending is up to you. The ending is up to you. And we know how it ended for them.

The ultimate response that they had to Jesus would be the end of the story. And their ultimate response to him was to crucify him.

And so how the story ended for them would have ended like something like this in the parable of the prodigal son with the older son. The father goes and pleads with him to come and celebrate.

The older son says, no, I'm not. And then as his father turns to go back to the party, the older son sees a piece of wood, a large piece of lumber at his feet.

And in a fit of rage, he picks it up. And he beats the father to death. With it. Since the parable in that story, the father represents Jesus and the older brother represents the religious leaders.

[31 : 10] The true ending of the story was that. They knew the parable was about them. But instead of repenting of their sin, instead they chose to conspire.

To kill Jesus. And celebrate his death. But. There's a sequel. To this story.

And it's a great sequel. In doing their worst. They accomplished God's best. Acts 2. 22 through 24. After Jesus has ascended to heaven.

When the church is born, Peter, one of his disciples, preaches and says to the men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, loosening the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

[32 : 16] The great sequel is that the grave could not keep Jesus down. He did not stay dead. He arose on the third day, signifying that sin through him had been conquered.

Guilt through him has been dealt with. Shame through him has been taken away from us. That he died in our place for our sins. That the blood he shed there was blood that he shed for us.

And that his resurrection is proof that God has accepted his sacrificial death on the cross. That sinners like you and me can be reconciled and have eternal life, which begins the moment you are saved.

The grave could not hold Jesus. He wasn't surprised by the cross. He knew that that's what he came to do. And he knew that he would come to bear our shame. Hebrews 12, 2. Who should we look to?

Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

[33 : 29] See, the invitation that Jesus gave back then still stands today. To come. To come to him. To enjoy the celebration with him.

The celebration of God's amazing grace. Our God who loves us. Our God who endures our shame by shamefully dying on the cross in our place. To cleanse us of our sins and forgive us now and forevermore.

There is sin, no sin that is too great that God cannot forgive it. No matter how dirty your garments may seem to you, Christ can cover them.

And he will if you come to him. If you are estranged from God today, today he urges you to acknowledge your guilt, admit your spiritual poverty, and embrace your heavenly father.

To be reconciled to him through Jesus Christ. And to come and join the celebration. In a moment I'm going to pray, and I'm going to ask those of you from our church who I talk to, there's going to be a few guys up here.

[34 : 41] And if you have heard the gospel today and you realize that was me, I'm the younger son. Or you realize I'm the older brother. That's me.

I'm without hope. I've been shameful or I've acted shamelessly. But I hear God calling to me and I want to join that celebration. I want to know his love and his amazing grace. I encourage you to come find one of them.

Or if you just want to be prayed for, I encourage you to come do that as well. Don't forget that God is an amazing God. God is a gracious God.

God is a loving heavenly father. Jesus Christ has come to die for sinners and he's been raised. And he's coming back.

And in the meanwhile, those of you who have been saved by God, we know that we have a job to do, don't we? We proclaim this good news of God's amazing grace. And we urge sinners like us to come to Christ and to be forgiven and join the celebration.

[35 : 43] Let's pray. Lord God, thank you for this time that we've had to come out together. Lord, we thank you for your word and we thank you for your revelation of your character to us.

we know that you are a gracious father, that you are a loving God, that you forgive sinners, that you give them eternal life, that you take away their shame and you bear it yourself on the cross. You clothe them with your righteousness. You celebrate the fact that what was lost has been found. And so Lord, I pray that those who are lost today, that your spirit would draw them to you, that they would be found, that there would be a celebration that takes place in heaven, knowing that there were lost ones who have come back to the father and who are being lavished by his grace. Lord, we pray that like you, we would go and we would share this good news, that we would demonstrate the character of the father, that we would demonstrate the character of Jesus Christ, being loving and gracious and compassionate, that people would see you in us. And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.