

# STORIES JESUS TOLD



## Two Rebellious Sons

Jesus was a master story teller, and when he was teaching people thronged around him listening to his words. He particularly used parables as a key teaching method during his 3 years of public ministry. Jesus did not simply want to entertain his audience. These were stories about every day life that contained within them divine truth he wanted his listeners to grasp. Often the setting in which the story is being told can indicate to us its purpose and help us unpack its meaning. Let's set the context of the story of the two sons, each of them rebelling in completely different ways.

### Luke 15:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable:

### Luke 15:11-16

<sup>11</sup> And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

### Luke 15:17-19

<sup>17</sup> "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."

**READ Luke 15:1-3.** Mark pronouns referring to Jesus with a  

*Who was drawing near to Jesus to listen to him?*

*How did the Pharisees respond?*

*In what way does Jesus reply to them?*

In our last study we looked at the first parable that Jesus told about the lost sheep. He goes on to tell another story about a man with two sons.

**READ Luke 15:11-16.** Mark son with a   and the father with a ▲

*V12 What does the son want?*

*How does the father respond?*

*V13-16 List all that happens to the son.*

*How do you think the young son was feeling as he sat far from home in a pig sty?*

*As the religious leaders were listening, how do you think they would be thinking about this young son?*

**READ Luke 15:17-19.** Mark the son with a  

*What is the turning point for this young son?*

*What decision does he make?*

*What does he expect his position in his father's house will be when he returns?*

## Luke 15:20-24

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

## Luke 15:25-32

<sup>25</sup> "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' <sup>31</sup> And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

The two things on this boy's mind as he sets out for home are the kindness of his father to the servants in the house, and his own lack of worth to be a son any longer.

**READ Luke 15:20-24** Mark the son with a  and mark the father with a 

*V20 List what you learn about the father.*

**Stop for a moment and remember that Jesus is the storyteller, telling us what God is really like.**

*V22-24 What else does he do for the son?*

*What does this tell you about how the father feels about his rebellious son?*

How do you think the tax collectors and sinners felt listening to this story? And what about the Pharisees? But Jesus is not finished...

**READ Luke 15:25-32.** Mark the father with a  and the older son with a 

*V25-28 List what we learn about the older brother.*

*V28 How does the father respond to him?*

*What does this tell you about the father?*

*V29-30 On what basis does he think he deserves the father's kindness more than the other son?*

*V31-32 How does the father respond?*

*Who do you think the older son represents in the audience listening to this story?*

*What is Jesus saying about their grumbling about the tax collectors and the sinners in v2?*

This story teaches us so much about the father heart of God and about two ways we can rebel - by rejecting God's love and running away or by thinking we deserve God's love through our own good works. Both miss the point.

## Ephesians 2:4-7

<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

## Psalm 103:8-14

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

<sup>9</sup> He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

<sup>10</sup> He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

<sup>11</sup> For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

<sup>12</sup> as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

<sup>13</sup> As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.

<sup>14</sup> For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

The Hebrew word for steadfast love is "HESED" and it means an unconditional love that looks for nothing in return. It has the idea of being committed, and never giving up. This is the love God has for us, just like the father in the story.

## Titus 3:4-5a

<sup>4</sup> But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy

Let's spend some time looking at what the Bible teaches us why & how we are accepted by God.

**READ Ephesians 2:4-7.**

*V4 How is God described?*

*V5-6 What did his mercy and love cause him to do?*

*On what basis are we saved?*

*How would you describe grace?*

*V7 What do we have to look forward to?*

Think about the story Jesus told. How does that story about the two sons help us to understand Ephesians 2:4-7?

**READ Psalm 103:8-14. Mark "GOD" and any pronouns referring to God with a **

*V8 How is God described?*

*V9 How does this add to v8?*

*V10 In what way is this demonstrated in our story?*

*V11-13 uses 3 pictures to teach us 3 truths about God. Note each one and reflect on it.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

*V14 What does God understand about us?*

*In what ways is this a comfort to know?*

**READ Titus 3:4-5a.**

*How do these verses sum up all we have learned?*

Our picture of God is one of the most important thoughts we can think. Based on this story of Jesus, how does God want us to picture him?