

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on March 27, 2022:**

**"Heart of the Father
(Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us that the heart of the Father doesn't ever reject us, but is waiting for us to renew our lives and return to Him.]

Introduction:

- So, how many of us here are privileged with memories of our father?
- And if we're honest with ourselves, those are both good and challenging memories.
- Pastor Craig had good memories of his dad when he was young, had some challenging memories of his dad when he was a teenager, and then had good memories after that.

- He then told his "sandbox story" where he was corporately punished for the wrong that he had done.
- So, we all have memories that are positive and negative about our fathers, but as we get older, our negative memories tend to become less challenging.

- It's interesting to note that the commentaries today no longer refer to this passage, we're going to read, as the "Prodigal Son" but focus on the father, which will see is so important.

Luke 15 (NASB), 1) Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near Jesus to listen to Him. 2) And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to complain, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

- Now the Pharisees and scribes were the religious leaders and were considered the "good guys."
- Luke usually turns that comment around and shows what a paradox that was.

3) And so He told them this parable,

- So, Jesus' message was for the religious leaders of His day as well as for the tax collectors and sinners.
- Now Jesus gave three parables here. First there was the "lost sheep", then the "lost coin" and now the "lost son."
- In the lost sheep parable, it showed what concern the shepherd had for the lost sheep and we'll see the concern the father had for his lost son.

11) And He said, "A man had two sons.

- So, we see that the focus is on the father from the beginning of this parable.

12) The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.'

- Now, in Jewish culture, what the son asked for was a real affront, because to ask for a share of the estate before the death of the father, it was as though the son was declaring his father already dead.
- Now, the father had the authority to do this even though it was not often done.

12b) And so he divided his wealth between them.

- Now, usually the oldest son got more of the estate than the younger brother or brothers did.
- But, here, it's assumed the estate was evenly divided even though it doesn't say so.

13) And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey to a distant country, and there he squandered his estate in wild living.

- Not only did this son cause an affront to the family and was disrespectful to his father and irritated his older brother, but he wanted to be free of the life style that he was required to live at home and live an unrestrained life.

14) Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began doing without.

- Now, today, we can turn our back on our spiritual father by focusing on other things that turns us away from the path of grace.
- And when we do that, we need to understand that the Father never rejects us.
- So, there are times in our spiritual lives that we can slip into that Prodigal Son scenario.
- This is not a passage to judge the son, but to ask, "How did the father react?"
- We need to know that God is always there for us and is always looking, seeking and waiting for us to return back to Him.
- We also need to realize that the Holy Spirit is always working with us to keep us engaged and also to bring us back to the Father.
- Now, interesting, the son thought he was going to achieve freedom, when he left the family environment, but what he entered into was a form of slavery.

15) So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

- Now, for a Jewish man, this was not a good situation to be with unclean animals.
- He probably started to think about whether what he had done was really the best thing he should have done.

16) And he longed to have his fill of the carob pods that the pigs were eating, and no one was giving him anything.

- He was really alone.

17) But when he came to his senses,

- Now, don't we always, from time, have to come to our senses, because of what we have done?

17) But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired laborers have more than enough bread, but I am dying here from hunger!

- Realizing the wrongs he had done, he begins to work up this repentance speech so he will be able to ingratiate himself back into the family

18) I will set out and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; 19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired laborers."

- Coming to his senses, he realized that he would have to beg his way back to the family just to be one of his family servants.

20) So he set out and came to his father.

- Now, these verses will show us the heart of the father, but more importantly, Jesus is revealing the heart of the Father in heaven.

20) So he set out and came to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

- Now commentaries note that in the Jewish culture, fathers did not run, because that was considered something beneath them.
- It wasn't that just the father was accepting the son back, but also wanted him to know that he was loved and included and welcomed back into the family with no questions asked.
- Now, the son, in the Jewish culture, had committed the worst kind of sins you could ever image, and yet his sins were a non-issue to the father.
- Now, it's not that God doesn't wink at sin, nor disregards sin because we know that sin won't exist in the kingdom, because sin brings heartache and desperation and it also brings a life of slavery.

21) And 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.' 22) But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet;

- Notice that the father interrupts his son and doesn't let him finish his prepared speech of repentance.
- The robe and the ring and the sandals show that the father had brought the son back into the family with authority because the servants didn't have rings or wore sandals.

23) and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let's eat and celebrate; 24) for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

- Now, the son wasn't dead physically, but lost his relationship with his father.
- Also, what is being said here tells us something about our relationship we have with the Father, Son and Spirit.
- We can be physically alive, but if we are not living in our heart and mind in that relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit, we're spiritually disengaged from God.
- We need to continue to engage in our relationship habits or disciplines of conversation, curiosity, contemplation so we can continue to be in our relationship with the Father, Son and Spirit.

25) "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26) And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. 27) And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'

- We could say that the older brother got a little sideways with all of this.

28) But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. 29) But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you never gave me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

- Notice that the father came to his elder son to plead with him to see what was really going on.

30) but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.' 31) And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.'

- And that's our relationship – the Father is always with us. And everything that God has is ours. But, sometimes, it doesn't always feel that way to us.

32) But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

- What does the Father long for in us?
- What the triune God wants and desires from us is that ongoing relationship of conversation, curiosity, contemplation.
- This reflects a life, not that's dead, but alive in God.
- So, we can celebrate that we are alive, that we are found in Christ.
- And we can challenge ourselves to not let life get in the way, both the attractions and challenges, to disrupt our relationship with God, but to stay on course.
- God wants our relationship with Him to be constantly steadfast and to live the life of giving to others, sharing both our physical and spiritual resources.
- We need to remember that were always embraced and always loved by the Father who has a heart that's so much larger than any of ours.
- We can rejoice in this today.

(Closing prayer)