



## The Joy of Salvation - Part 3

### Grieving Over the Sinfulness of Sin

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Luke 15:11-13

As you're taking your seat be sure to take your Bible out and call up this passage in Luke chapter 15, turn to that text that is probably the most famous parable that Jesus ever told. In our day people know it, they can talk about it, they know the name of it, that's been given at least in popular culture. It is the longest parable that Jesus ever told. We finally reach this parable known as the Prodigal Son as we worked our way verse by verse through Luke. We've been in this 15<sup>th</sup> chapter for a couple weeks. We took in one week that first parable of the lost sheep. Second week we dealt with the lost coin. Today we're going to start this discussion of the lost son. (01:14)

But before we get into it, I want you to see where each these end. Clearly, these are tied together with an intent, a purpose that Christ is trying to accomplish in his hearers. In the first audience, of course, was primarily those Pharisees and Scribes that met in the very beginning of chapter 15. But look at how he ends that discussion of course about the Shepherd is very excited to get his lost sheep back, look at verse number 7 when he says, "Okay, here's the parallel, here's the point, just so, just like that happy Shepherd, I tell you there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents." So that's the point of that parable. Verse 10, the coin is found the woman is excited, we looked at that the last time we were together. We tried to update it with the idea of what that silver coin might have been worth about 100 dollars. That's an important find for a gal that has only one thousand bucks in her checking account. And again, he says, she's so happy calling her friends together. Verse 10 says just so I tell you there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (02:14)

Now those are indicative statements. Those are statements about what is. Now drop down to the bottom of the lost son, just to get ahead a little bit here. How does this last parable end? This time in the words of the father, in the prodigal son story, speaking to the older brother. Look at verse 32. The father says to the older son about the younger son, listen it is – now here's the word I would love for you to underline, highlight, bracket, star it – fitting, it is fitting. Now that's a strong Greek word by the way. The root of it goes back to the Greek word, to tie, to bind, to fuse together. The concept of having something bound together and that is the thing that he is describing and the thing that should happen in response to it. Some translations translate it, it's necessary, it must be, it ought to be. ESV, it's fitting. To do what? To celebrate and be glad. Why? For this your brother was dead and is alive, he was lost and is found. Therefore, we know we've gone from the indicative reality of heaven getting excited about a sinner who repents, just like a Shepherd who finds a lost sheep. We've talked about the angels celebrating before God and God being excited when a sinner repents, just like a woman who finds a lost coin. (03:26)

Now here's the point of all three parables in the words of the father saying, it must happen. So just as we start this last parable here, we'll spend four weeks on it but I do want to have you remember that if you leave this series, six weeks worth and you do not go away with a greater excitement, celebration and joy over sinners who repent, whether that's you looking back at your repentance, assuming you're a Christian, or those that repent around you that you see in our church, your neighborhood and your sphere of evangelism. If you don't come away with more joy then you've missed the whole point of this chapter. You will have failed to do what Christ has asked you to do. So, I at least I just want to paint that target again in your mind and say, "Listen it would be a failure for us in the twenty-first century to study the fifteenth chapter of Luke and not be more celebratory, be glad, be joyful, when I think of the concept of sinners repenting, when I think of my repentance, when I think of other people's repentance, when I hear of someone coming to Christ, if I don't rejoice more, if I don't celebrate more, if I'm not glad more, then we've failed." (04:28)

So that's the point. The first parable we tried to get you there, that was the aim, we tried to aim at that objective by saying, think about when you've been used as the agent of seeing someone saved and sadly many of you haven't. And we talked about how sad that is that Evangelical Christians haven't led somebody to Christ but many of you have. And so, we said think about that, either imagine it happening or you have thought about it, wasn't that exciting, wasn't that joyful, isn't that important? And we thought well can't we be more excited about the salvation of sinners because we can imagine being a part of it? And then the last time we got together we looked at the lost coin and we flipped it around and said, now wasn't it exciting to think about how God loved us enough to seek and



save us. So, we thought about considering what it's like to find the lost, in the first parable what it's like to be found, in the second parable and as we start the third parable I want to say, okay, let's just start the first segment of the third parable by saying instead of thinking about the thing that's gained, instead of thinking about certainly in contrast to last time when we're together, what it's like to have the love of God be targeting us being found. Those are the advantages of salvation. I want to flip that over and say, well let's just think about what is missed, what is avoided, what is evaded. (05:42)

When I say that even? If I say, okay being saved, salvation. What am I saved from? If you think, well I know where this is going, matter of fact you'll flip the worksheet over and oh he's given us books and whenever he talks about the issue of judgment and the consequences of sin he has all those books about hell and the reality of hell. Well listen I don't even have that there this week. Why? I don't want you to think about the consequences of what we're saved from. I just want to deal with today, what we are saved from. Without thinking about where that thing leads, I mean we'll touch on that, but let's just focus on the reality of what it is that the lost are saved from. That's a good place for us to start. Because if you do not appreciate what you are saved from I guarantee you'll never celebrate with any real profound gladness that you are saved. And you won't be all that excited when you hear someone else is saved. (06:32)

Let's put it this way, you and I have avoided a lot of disasters this week. Right? I mean if you just think about it. Well, yeah, sure, there was a meteor out there somewhere that didn't slam into the planet and kill us all. Did you know that? Well, that's somewhere. Well was there one that came close? I don't know, you don't know. You're not tracking, you know, the universe but I mean there was something there that didn't happen. There was a drunk driver somewhere in the sphere of your driving pattern this week that did not slam into your car and send you to the hospital, you avoided being hit by a drunk driver. There's a pile of germs somewhere in your house that did not somehow invade some orifice of your body and make you ill. You avoided getting sick if in fact you did. But I'll bet you didn't have the meteor missed us party, did you? Did anybody celebrate that? You didn't have the I didn't get in a car accident celebration at your house. You didn't buy yourself an extra desert last night and say I didn't get sick this week because I missed those germs that are tucked away in the corner of my kitchen counter. No, why? Because you didn't even think about it. You didn't have it identified. You didn't understand it. You didn't give it any thought. You didn't think about what you were saved from. But if that were clearly identified and you focused on it and you understood it, well then, I bet you would celebrate. (07:45)

Like if I said that crazy guy in North Korea finally got that nuke thing figured out and he's actually got one on a big jet that he's bringing over. And guess what he wants to target first? Southern California. So, he's going to drop this nuke and it's a really big one and it's going to blow up all of Southern California. And as you leave the church all your news feeds start popping up, you turn on the radio everybody breaks into their regular programing to talk about the crazy North Korean dictator who's sending a nuke to the west coast of California and it'll be here in a matter of hours. And every single thing on every single channel on every single radio station is all about that. And they're talking about what you should do. And we've got the Federal Government tell you better find a bunker and you better get some supplies and you better get some rations, you better figure out where you're going to go to survive this. All that's on your mind for the next three hours, that's all you're thinking about. And of course, you're glued to your television, you're watching and you've got your phone out and you're seeing all the news stories. And you're starting to get really scared. And then all of a sudden it breaks in the corner of your news feed, here comes some F/A-18 Hornets scrambled from the Navy, right? They go out there, they get their laser guided bombs and you get a real-time view of them blowing this plane up from North Korea somewhere in the middle of nowhere in the Pacific Ocean and it goes away. I bet you would have a "we didn't get nuked today" party tonight. Right? You've already collected some rations, right? You might as well have a party and get your friends together and celebrate. Why? Because you knew what the problem was. (09:22)

If you go to the doctor this week and say you've got a really really weird strain of some strange cancer and it's fast and its aggressive and you know what? Your doctor just sits across the table and says I just hate to tell you this but you better go home and get your affairs in order. I mean I really think this is probably going to wipe you out in, I don't know, two or three months at the most. You don't have much time to live. Do you have a will? Do you have a living trust? I mean you better get your family, you've got family across the country, you better come, you better make sure they understand they need to be there. Take their vacation time if they want any time with you, they better get it now because you're going down. And all you did from that point on was go on the internet and try research it and all these long weird names you don't understand, you're thinking about this thing, you're thinking about your



life, you're thinking about your family without you, you're thinking about your kids, you're thinking about all your relatives. That's all that's on your mind. And then you get a call from a doctor. Hey there's an experimental drug it was just approved by the FDA I want you to come down, there's great hope this might help you. They inject it or do whatever, they put you in some thing and bam within a matter of three weeks you're completely healthy and the doctor test after test after test after test you're better. I'll bet you'd have a "I'm not dying of a strange strain of cancer" party. I'll bet you would, I'll bet your family would be so relieved. Why? Because that's all you thought about. You focused on it, you realized what a threat this is to your life. (10:38)

You didn't have the meteor didn't destroy our planet party, but you would have "I'm freed from cancer" party because you knew, you understand and you thought about the threat. If we're supposed to leave this series with a great deal of joy regarding salvation, you shouldn't be able to hear that word without saying, yeah I'm more excited after the series than I was before. I'm more happy, I'm more glad, I'm more relieved, I just love hearing the concept of being saved by grace. Then you better identify what we're being saved from. And I don't even want to talk about the consequences long term. I just want to talk about the concept right now. So, let's deal with that, believe it or not, let's just deal with three verses and since this is such a familiar parable to you, you know it right? Non-Christians know this parable. Here it is, you've got a son, he wants his inheritance, he gets his inheritance, he goes off, it doesn't work out well, he squandered his dad's property, he ends up eating the pods that the pigs are eating, he ends up coming to his senses as it says, he comes back to the father, the father is waiting with open arms, throws a feast, older brother is not happy, dad lectures the older brother and that's where it ends. Right? I've just given you the whole parable. That's it. And you know it. (11:46)

And since you know it, I'm not going to read the whole thing for the sake of time, because we'll get there. We'll spend four weeks on this. But let's just start with the first three verses. And let's just understand, verse by verse, what we're dealing with here, that I hope by the end of our time together this morning you'll say, you know what? I'm so grateful. I'm happy I want to celebrate that I'm saved, that that person in my small group got saved, that someone's sin was canceled because realize what a terrible awful thing this thing is called sin. (12:14)

Let's start in verse number 1, let's just read the three verses we'll cover today. It says, and he – that is Christ of course, follow along with me Luke 15 verse 11 – it says this quote, there was a man who had two sons. Verse 12 and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father give me the share of the property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Amazingly enough. Verse 13, not many days later the younger son gathered all he had and he took a journey into a far country and there he squandered his property in reckless living. Verse 11, you're looking at that going how in the world is he going to get a point out of verse 11? Let's think about this, we're introduced to a man who has two sons. If you know the parable, of course you do, we're going to hear about the younger son, which we did in the first two verses that follow that, verses 12 and 13, the younger son, he wants his property, dad gives him his property, his inheritance, he goes off and squanders his property. So instantly we have a picture of a young man, I don't know what we're supposed to think but I assuming we're thinking of a late teenager, early 20-something guy. He's got a rich father, we know that because how this story unfolds with the fatted calf, servants and all that. So, he's got a lot of property, a big estate, he wants his inheritance so he can go off and have a great time in Las Vegas or whatever the equivalent was back in this parable. And he wants to go live it up. And of course, he comes to his senses because where ever that great thought was about being this independent guy who goes and has a great time, it ends with him eating the slop that the pigs are eating. And he goes what am I doing? I'd be better off being a servant at my dad's house. So, whatever it was that leads him to the pig pen looked attractive at the beginning when he said, "Yeah, that's a good idea. Let's do that." So, I know this about the younger son, this was not a good move although he thought it was a good move. We call that deception. But this is a story, and you need to note this carefully that is directed to the Scribes and the Pharisees. Verse number 1 chapter 15, all of these are because in reality the bad guy in this story is not just the younger son who lives a reckless life with his father's inheritance but the older son as well who get rebuked at the end of the parable and ends up getting mad and expressing his anger toward his father. (14:40)

So, in reality you read this and you see in verse 11 and Christ says, "There was a man who had two sons." And you go, I know this story, good son and a bad son. If that's what you think, think again because that's not right. This is a story about two bad sons. Two bad sons with two different experiences and two different expressions of their badness. One is one who says, "I'm out of here, leaving." And he goes. And one is one that really had kind of left in his heart, but he stays in the house. You've heard me say this many times because I love the story about the kid in the classroom standing up, standing up, standing up. Teacher tells him to sit down 100 times and finally goes and



yells at the kid. The kid sits down and the kid says with this snarl on his face, "I may be sitting on the outside but I'm standing on the inside." The defiance was exactly what we see going on here with the older brother, who may be at home on the outside, his body, but he had already left on the inside. And I'll prove that to you as we untangle this parable and we see it for the mastery that it is. A rebuke to the older brother when the whole time you're thinking the younger brother is the bad guy and of course he is. But the older brother has got a big problem. And the whole point of all three of these parables is to get us to expose that problem of the older brother. (16:00)

Now with that in view, I need to say this, some of us are deceived just by reading this thing, good son and a bad son. No, no, no, don't be deceived, as a matter of fact the older brother was just as deceived as the younger brother. The younger brother was deceived by thinking, you know this is a good off-ramp for me to get out of the house and go do my own thing. It ends in the pigpen. The other son stays and ends up in an argument with the father showing that he is at animosity and hostility toward his dad, and his dad has to rebuke him. Both these sons have got a problem with the Father. And I think that'd be the first observation we should make. If you're taking notes, and I wish that you would, you pulled out your worksheet, jot this down. Number one on your outline this morning, let's make this first observation. You and I ought to learn from that. We ought to beware of sins deception. (16:41)

### 1. Beware of Sins Deception

Sin is very deceptive. We're going to talk about sin in this sermon today. And I want you to think about sin perhaps in a more broad and theologically accurate way than you and I are accustomed to thinking about it. If I say the word sin, you probably think of bad things that people do. And you'd be right. But it's half the story. Sin is obviously doing something that is not in accordance with God's will. It's saying something that's not in accordance with God's will. It's thinking something that's not in accordance with God's will. It's planning something that's not... I get all that. Planning, thinking, speaking, doing, those are bad things, those are sinful things. You've been through our discipleship program here at the church, you know, and it's very important that we get this as we think about evangelism, you think about your own salvation. Sin is not only an action, a word, a statement, a behavior, sin really is primarily a state. And that's a distinction you need to make. It's a distinction all a part of the whole that we are in a state of sin and that is the problem. And that's why this illustration of the prodigal son is so helpful. The state of sin and if you take the word sin and you see what it is throughout the scripture, even the word itself in the New Testament in particular of something not arriving at its destination, not being what it ought to be, and often I use that phrase from a popular book from a theologian that sin is really the things in the world not being as they ought to be. They fall short, there's separation of what I ought to be. (18:12)

So, think about sin this way, it's separation. If I do something that is wrong it is separated from the template of what it ought to be. If I'm living in a state of sin, I'm living in a state of separation. That's why this parable is so helpful, the graphic picture of a boy saying, "I'm out of here. I'm leaving. I'm not going to be in the domain that I should be and I'm not going to live under your house. I'm not going to live under your roof anymore." He leaves, he's separated from the father. Now my point is the older brother is separated from the father too. But he's physically in the house. Now just saying that if you're well versed in the Bible you might be thinking of verses right now. Isaiah 29 Jesus quotes it in Matthew, he says, you know what these people they draw near to me with their words, they honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me. See that's the problem. The younger son was deceived. Let's just spend a minute talking about that before I get to where I think most of us are most vulnerable. And that is we sit here in church, we read our Bibles, you give, you do what you're supposed to do, you have a ministry, whatever, or you do it to some degree of relative faithfulness. And we can be at odds with God, there can be distance between us and God. (19:23)

Let's talk about the guy who just runs headlong into a distant country. Let's just talk about that for a minute. Why did he take the offramp to go do this and end up having him eat slop in a pig pen? Well because there was something about this that wasn't happening on its own, if I'm going to think in the broadest sense of the biblical story. Okay, go back in your mind to Genesis 3. Genesis 3 you've got a sin, at least in theory of a tree that should not be eaten. You've got a couple there made by God, supposed to do God's will and it would be sin, they would not doing what they're supposed to be doing to eat this fruit. Enter in the tempter, in the picture of a snake, depicted as a snake, a slithering deceptive nefarious, you know, snake who does things in a way that are crafty. He comes in as the tempter and he's got a goal, and that is I'm going to remove these people from where they ought to be in terms of their behavior and that will result in them being where they ought not to be in terms of a state of separation from the father. (20:27)



You can put it this way, this one is called elsewhere in the Bible, the most common term for him is Satan. Satan in Hebrew, Satan it's transliterated in Greek Satan, transliterated into English Satan. So, we have that word in Hebrew Old Testament, Greek New Testament, English today as I preach in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But if you were to translate it instead of transliterate it, you wouldn't have the word Satan you'd have some other word that would tell us what it means. If you're going to look that up in a lexicon, a dictionary, it would say adversary, opponent. So, I have an opponent that wants to have happen in these people's lives what ought not happen. In this case of our story, to leave the father's domain. Go out and do your own thing. To do that he employs something that is his other name, one of his names in the Bible, and that is he is called the tempter. That's another title for him. To get you to do what he wants done which is to remove you from the domain of God, to separate you from God, to use the word of John 10, he comes to steal, kill and destroy, he wants to destroy you, he wants to kill you, he wants to remove you from the life of the Father. He's going to employ his strategy which is temptation. Matthew chapter 4, 1 Thessalonians the tempter comes and tempts you. I mean that's his name because that's his number one strategy. (21:40)

I told you about my crickets in the garage did I not? Yeah, you did. Well, because I mention things like that from the pulpit not seeking advice or help but you're such a generous congregation I get it anyway. Many of you came up with these strategies to get rid of my crickets. I'm so grateful for your input. But many of your strategies to kill the crickets in my garage and in my house as they creep down the hallway, is involving things like molasses. I heard that a lot. Get some molasses, I'm afraid of putting molasses in my garage thinking there might be a bear in there or something, I don't know what I'll attract with that. But you want to kill my crickets and you know to kill the cricket that's what the enemy wants to do, the adversary. He needs to have something to attract him and that's called bait, that's temptation. The son did not depart from the father's house without temptation. The older brother did not depart from in his heart the relationship with the father without temptation. (22:39)

Temptation, to put it in a word, pleasure. We want to feel good, we want to feel right. Satan knows that, look this would be great for you, back to the garden. How did he appeal to Eve to break the rules of God, to remove them from fellowship with God, to have them be at distance from God to leave the house and domain and leadership of God? Well he said look at this, take a good look at it wouldn't that be good for you? Wouldn't that feel good? Look at how delightful it is to look at. No one is tempted without the enemy bringing up something that is going to appeal to our senses and our pleasure. It could be the internal pleasure of saying something I shouldn't say. Gossiping about a person I shouldn't gossip about, I shouldn't gossip about anyone. Lying when I should tell the truth. Sleeping with someone who is not my spouse. Engaging in things that are only for a context here but doing them over here. Satan is going to tempt you by saying this will be good for you, this will feel good, pleasure. How good is the enemy at baiting people, human beings, to depart from the path of God? Well, he's really good at it. He's had thousands and thousands of years of practice. He knows, he knows you, he knows how you are tempted. As I like to say, he has deep pockets. Whatever it is it's going to bait you and attract you to get off the path, he'll do that. (24:01)

If you want to think back to your non-Christian days if you happen to be a Christian thinking back to non-Christian days, think about how he kept you there. How he kept you in the pigpen and not returning to the father. I mean the concept of bringing you away from God, he's got to somehow entice you. I mean think about the combination of these words in Hebrews 11, as the writer of Hebrews talks about Moses, saying listen he stood up for what was right, that was hard because he had to say no to – here's the phrase – the passing or fleeting pleasures of sin. Now I say sin I say it in the context of the church. We don't think about pleasure but if you're honest, and most of you I hope are as you think through the topic, you think that's the point, it's pleasurable. There's no way Satan is going to bait a hook with something not pleasurable. Why do you want me to put molasses on a page of glue or in a bowl of water? Because you want to drown those poor crickets. I know they're my enemies last week, but now I'm kind of warmed up to them. You think attract them with something they like, attract them, bait that trap, then you'll trap them, then you'll have them and then you can kill them. Sin is deceptive. (25:08)

You need to be aware of sins deception. It will always be presented to you as something that feels good. The younger brother took the bait. The older brother it was even more deceptive for him because he took the bait in a way that no one could see. His friends thought, I mean think about the older brother's friends. Your younger brother cashed in his inheritance, split. Oh man, what a loser. Glad you're not like him. Does this start to sound like what we're going to read about if you know your Bibles in Luke 18 the Pharisee and the Tax Collector? We always talk about that parable. Tax Collector sits there, feeling completely unworthy, beats his chest, have mercy on me a sinner he prays to God in the recesses of the shadows of the temple mount and yet the Pharisee, prideful, glad I'm not like

that loser. And then Jesus' commentary, which one went home from the temple mount justified, which one is right with God? Not the Pharisee, because why? The deception of him having one foot in, that everyone saw on the outside, and one foot out in his own heart. So, let's move to the older brother to think about the deception of sin, you and I are deceived when we go through the motions, as Isaiah says, or Matthew says, Jesus says as Matthew records, of drawing near to God with our words and having our hearts far from him. Moving toward God in our bodies to the church and doing what we ought to do, assembling together but really our hearts are not there. We sang songs on the screen here, I mean some of you mouthed the words, but your brain didn't engage. You didn't mean what you said and if that's you, well then you drew near with your words but God's looking going, hmm, nothing going on here, as a matter of fact he says to the Old Testament people whose hearts were removed although they lived in the house of the "father", he said away from me with the noise of your songs. Why all this trampling of my courts? Why did I come to church? You told us to come to church. Why are we singing these songs? Why do you call them noise? They're songs of joy, we're singing the Psalter of the Old Testament. But your heart is not here. The ultimate deception, the Bible presents this phrase with the word self-deceived is in James 1, when we sit and study our Bible together. We sit and study our Bibles, we read what it says. The Bible says if you read it or you hear it but you don't do what it says, then you are involved in something the Bible calls in James chapter 1, self-deception. I mean I'll read it, it's an old passage, you know it. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, because if you're hearers only you're deceiving yourselves. (27:39)

Laodicea thought they were doing alright, Revelation chapter 3, but they had one foot in, which was the externals of their lives, and one foot out, which was the most important foot, their hearts. And he says, because you're neither hot nor cold, I'm going to spit you out of my mouth. Which is a euphemism because if you heard this passage taught, it's the Greek word for vomit. I mean this is a visceral word. So, God says listen don't be deceived by sin. Sin is a state of separation from God. You know non-Christians, you look at your neighbors, you're pulling out of your driveway coming to church this morning, look at that guy he's going golfing, packing his golf club, he's going on this walk or going to do his Yoga this morning. And you say look at that guy. Well, there's the younger brother if you will, not even interested in obeying God, not even going to church, hasn't read the Bible in years, has no interest in God, it's easy to see that. And you'd say that's deception, he needs God and you drive to church. If you are not here in your heart, if you're not engaged in your mind as you sing, if you are not here ready to do what the word says, you just want to learn what it says then the Bible says you're as self-deceived as your neighbor. Matters of fact more so. These people honor me with their lips but their heart is far from me. We need to be aware of sins self-deception. (28:56)

Verse 12, Luke 15, the younger brother says, I want out. That's why he asked the father for his money. Father give me a share of my property that's coming to me. An amazing thing about this as I said when I read it the first time, he divided his property between them. The father says, okay, wow now there's a theological conundrum for us, the father would actually do this, but it's been going on from the beginning. The kind of "freedom" that God is giving people, to actually go off and leave the domain, the care, the relationship with God. But I want to look at the analyzation of what this is, why did he want that money? Well, he had an inheritance, rich father, if you know anything about Old Testament law, Deuteronomy says you have to give a double portion to the older son. So, you've got a father with two sons that means the younger son is going to get one third, the older son is going to get two thirds, even that's enough for the younger son to be frustrated and he's not happy. He wants to cash out his dad's inheritance. You get the inheritance when dad dies, you want it now. So, you're saying I don't want to wait for that, I'm not going to live under your roof, I want my money now. I'm going to Vegas now, I'm going to live it up now. I'm going to go to New York now, I'm going to do my thing now. I want independence, I want freedom, I want self-direction as we see where this goes, he's blowing his money with prostitutes and partying. He wants to have fun. I mean just as I wrote those words down and thinking of the things this person, he wants the money, the fun, he wants freedom, he wants independence. I'm thinking to myself that sounds like every generation of people. That's what we want. That's the oldest temptation from the beginning. It's exactly what we saw in the Garden. God said this but he didn't say that, you make your own decision. Where does this end for him? Remember this, eating the slop in a pig pen and then he says, "Oh, I shouldn't have done this." The clarity of sin is only there after it's been fully matured. And in that regard, everyone is going to find that out, even those that are in the middle of pursuing their freedom. And in that regard the story is a story about the folly of that self-direction. And that would be a good thing to jot down secondly this morning, number 2, we need to recognize the folly of self-direction. (31:13)

## 2. Recognize the Folly of Self-Direction

Self-direction, that's a good thing. No, you're right, the world thinks that's a good thing. Everyone tells you that's a good thing. I go on the internet I'm just going to try this funny how sometimes God just right out of the gate, the first hit I had looking for kind of a device on being a wealth builder in this country, the very first website I hit and just opened up had this list. Here are phrases quotes directly from the web page. Be your own man, make up your own mind. Do what you want, make your own decisions. Don't let other people tell you what to do, be yourself. I quoted those, what was that, 6 things down, and I thought to myself, you could put a label at the top of this web site in any way, any topic, this could be the topic of discussion about sexuality. It could be the topic of discussion about philosophy. It was a topic of discussion about finance and career. It could be the topic of discussion about anything. That is the philosophy of our world. We saw it in Genesis 3 and it's been going on ever since. And here is a picture of a man who says give me my inheritance so I can go do what I want, be my own man, make up my own mind, make my own decisions, not having other people tell me what to do. That's exactly where our world lives. (32:17)

In the modern world, it's no surprise that that is the mantra of our day because we in western civilization had our origins so to speak philosophically from the enlightenment of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. And that was without any blushing at all a transparent declaration of our independence from any kind of parental oversight of God and the church. Immanuel Kant put it this way, humanity's – here's what the enlightenment is, by his definition – humanity's departure from its self-imposed immaturity. Does that sound like what this kid was saying in this parable, when he said let me out of here, I don't need dad tell me what to do anymore, I want to be my own man, I want to make my own decisions. And society reached this place of maturity when it said I'm done with the self-imposed immaturity, I'm not getting zapped when I leave I'm going to go out from underneath all of this leadership of the church and God and all this thing that's been developed in our culture about listening to God's law and God's rules. And we've been just living in the last few hundred years, it's just an outgrowth of that. That's all this is. Voltaire, I mean the golden boy of the enlightenment says this in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He said, you know in fifty years the world will hear no more of the Bible. See this was a direct assault upon all of that strictures and all of that bonding that God has of us because he's going to tell us what to do. He's not going to tell us what to do, we're going to do whatever we want. Which lead to poems like this I've quoted years past, Invictus in 1875, William Earnest Henley. Invictus by the way translated means unconquered, no one is going to be my boss, you're not the boss of me. All of this in Western civilization was aimed at we don't want God being our father anymore. (34:12)

Here's the last two lines of Invictus, I've quoted the whole thing in years past but it ends with this, it matters not how straight the gates, how charged with punishments the scroll. Now follow those words, it matters not how straight the gate, who's saying things about a straight gate? A narrow road, well, that's us, Bible teachers, scripture. No matter how charged with punishments the scroll. Oh, you take your old Bible, that old and it's threatening me, if I don't do what it says I'm going to hell, there's going to be punishment. It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. Here's the punch line, I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul. I mean that was the consummation of the theology, they called it philosophy, of the enlightenment. You ain't the boss of me anymore. See that's been going on since the garden, it's just caught on in terms of everyone unashamed and unabashedly saying to the world, that's who we are now. We don't need God, we certainly don't need God telling us what to do. Where does that end? According to the Bible it ends poorly. (35:20)

Matters of fact I will not going to get into all the dirty details of Psalm 2 but I would like you to turn there real quickly, we don't have much time but let's look at this quickly. Our resolve and this is what sin is, a resolve to be self-directed. Which reminds me of this sermon I preached, there was a very successful surgeon, chief of staff at his hospital in LA used to come hear me preach, and he would pull me aside and he heard enough of my sermons to kind of know the general tenor of my preaching but whenever I preached on something that dealt with the issue of submission and humility and submitting ourselves to the will of God, he would rail against me on those sermons. What are you doing? People need to see their potential, people need to be men, we're men, we don't need this submission to God, I mean that's what humanity is all about, seeing our fault. Hated it, hated it. And I thought to myself this typifies the non-Christian worldly response to us saying, submit yourself to the father, do what he says, not my will but yours be done. And this very successful president of American Medical Association in LA he became a Christian. And then it was very interesting to watch his responses to my sermons after that. I'd talk about submitting to the will of the Father, I would talk about not my will but yours, and he'd put his arms around me, that was the greatest sermon I've ever heard in my life, awesome, it was so good. I'm thinking man I haven't changed here. I'm preaching the same things I've been preaching, what happened to you? Well, what happened to me is I realized, eating the slop in the pig pen is not where I want to live anymore, I'm ready to go live in the father's house, and now I realize the folly of self-direction, I'm ready to let the Father direct my life. And sometimes this is put in a



guise package of Christianity and spirituality like you can have Christ kind of come into the cockpit of your life as I often mock. And say, yeah, I want God to be my co-pilot. I've often told you God is not signed up for that role, he's not going to be your co-pilot. Certainly, we want him to ride along because when we come in for a landing we might need some help you know. It's kind of bump bumpy there at the end of life, but in reality, that's just the enlightenment with a little veil and veneer of Christianity over the top of it. We are not called to be self-directed, we're called to be submissive to the will of the Father. (37:28)

Psalms 2, it says look at the nations. You want to talk about a fever pitch certainly the enlightenment was a fever pitch of the nations raging and the people plotting in vain. What were they plotting about? Verse 2, the kings of the earth set themselves the rulers take council together the celebrities the athletes, the popstars of our culture, they plot in vain. What are they saying? They take council together against the Lord and against his anointed, which of course from a Christological perspective it's Christ and his words and his teaching. What do they say? Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us. That could have been the battle cry of the enlightenment, it's the battle cry of the new sexual ethic of our day, is it not? Don't tell me what to do, I'll do whatever feels good to me. I'm going to realize my own desires. Now there's so much here we don't have time for, but at least drop down to how this ends. Verse 10. Hey kings, now therefore o kings, be wise, be warned oh rulers of the earth, celebrities, sports stars, pop stars be warned, serve the Lord with fear. Go back home, he's the master and rejoice. There's our theme from Luke 15, rejoice that he would take you back, but rejoice with trembling, he's in charge, he's the master, he's the king. Kiss the Son to speak Christologically there's no way to get to the Father house except through Christ. You better kiss the son lest he be angry and you perish in the way for his wrath is quickly kindled. And it is, I know we like to talk about a loving Jesus with butterflies and kittens and all that but you understand you reject the Christ of the Bible, one day you'll be on the wrong side of the Great White Throne and then here's the thing we ought to be celebrating, blessed are all those who take refuge in Him. You come back home the Father is ready, that's where this parable ends in Luke 15. How blessed you are. I love that Hebrew word, Asher, how happy you are, how rejoicing you'll be. How great it'll be, how glad and celebratory you'll be. Take refuge in the home of the Father. (39:38)

The self-made American, post enlightenment people do not want to think that way. But the only way to be saved is to come back to the Father knowing the folly of what it is to try and live life a self-directed autonomous person. Recognize the folly of self-direction. (39:53)

And so, we see verse 13 of Luke 15, back to our passage printed there on your worksheet. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all that he had, he got his inheritance, he took a journey into a far country and there he squandered his property in reckless living. It's where the old title of this comes from, the old translation, the prodigal living, reckless living, extravagant living. I mean he's playing big numbers on the tables in Vegas. I mean he's putting down big money, he's with high dollar prostitutes. I mean this is, he's living it up. And what's ironic about that is how did you get all that money to put those bets down on the table, rent those girls for the night, how is that? It says here his property, but did he earn that property? He didn't earn that property, that's the Father's property. Verse 12 told me the father graciously and almost unthinkably gave him his inheritance. And he off went with no money he earned and he went out there an indulged in self and pleasure. What I want to show is the tie between those two things. This is not his property, these are not his dollars, his shekels, they're not his denarius. This is the father's, this is scandalous. The father has an inheritance and it's not to be used on prostitutes and being drunk. That's exactly, that's a scandal, number three let's put it down that way, we need to sense the scandal of self-indulgence. (41:20)

### 3. Sense the Scandal of Self-Indulgence

Self-indulgence which should take you again back to the garden. Here is the tempter saying look how good this is for food, look how delightful this is for the eyes, this feels so good, this will be desirous to make you wise. Eat it, eat it, eat it. And so, she indulges without any respect for the boundaries, parameters, precepts, rules, commands of God. This is scandalous without getting too philosophical because everything has a purpose. And the purpose of what God has created is not for sin. It's for hitting the mark, sin is not hitting the mark. Everything that God makes has a purpose, and those purposes should be realized, that's what we call as I often talk from the platform, about that great Greek word teleios. It's the teleios use of all thing, the rightful use of all things. Let's start with people in general, this is the Sunday School way to look at it, but Colossians chapter 1 verse 16 says God created everything, there's nothing that's been created visible or invisible, whether thrones, dominions, rulers or authority. All things were created by him and do you know the rest of that verse? For him, everything is for him. So, in the biggest sense of the





word, that son in this analogy, was made to bring glory to the Father. Your life is for him, everything is for him, so everything should be used for him. And whether I eat or drink which is in the immediate usage is to nourish my body, keep me going, fuel me up for another day, should be to the glory of God because it's fueling a body that's trying to stay within the steps of what God has asked us to do, so everything is used for its purpose, because that's what food is for. As 1 Timothy chapter 4 says everything is created and it's good and it's useful and it's got a purpose and it's to be appropriated for the purpose that it's made for. And you know what? Money was not made to be spent on prostitutes. Sex was not made for prostitution. Your life was not made to be hanging out in that drunken state and to be living with the pigs in the pig sty. None of it was made for that, that's scandalous that you've taken what God has made and used it for a purpose that it's not made for. (43:32)

You parents of adult children when you have your child come home with a ring on her finger and she says, it's time man, let's put that big wedding together that I've always planned. And you moms of the bride get so into this, you get so excited you start planning and you figure this out and you go shopping for the dress with your daughter, you order the cake, you get all the decorations, you rent out the hall and everything is exactly how you wanted and everything is designed to bring glory to your daughter in that situation. And you as the mother of the bride, the father of the bride to enjoy and soak in the glory of what this is here for. The nuptials of your daughter. And then I show up. And I say, that cake looks great, I'm going to have some of it right now before I go and sit down. I'm going to go into the little banquet hall before I go in there, I'm going to have a few pieces, feed it to my kids. Matters of fact I brought my dog, he's right outside, put a bunch of it in a bowl out there for my dog. You know what? My dog loves cake. We're just going to indulge ourselves on you. Oh, and that dress, yeah it's got a lot of extra fabric in the back, I'm going to cut that out man. You know I really need some really cool satin fabric for some projects I'm doing at the house. Hey kids look, we're looking, this is great. Oh, and I saw some of that food you have over there, it'd be great if I just had a little barbeque flavor on it. So, I brought my hibachi and we're going to put it up in the corner of the reception hall. I'm going to just light a little fire, it'll smell like lighter fluid for a while but it's okay, don't worry. And I'm going to cook some things up, because I kind of like to have a mid-morning barbeque, it'll be awesome. You know it may be not what you want but it's what I want, you want me to be happy, don't you? I could go on and on, but if everything in that wedding was designed for a purpose and I came in and I did what I want to with all those things you designed for a purpose I'd bet I wouldn't be your favorite guest that day. Am I right? You wouldn't even let me sign the guest book, because you're saying what an egregious, scandalous use of things that had another purpose. (45:31)

Everything in this story reminds us of how scandalous it is that someone would take what was meant to glorify the Father and instead would use it for the self-indulgence of his own pleasure. All things were made by him and for him and because we are the sheep of his pasture, and I have no time to get to this in the sermon but on the discussion questions for your small groups on the back please spend a little time thinking through Psalm 100 which is just an elaboration of the concept of our origins begin very germane to the topic of why you are here and what your purpose is. God is made you as it's put in Psalm 103, you should know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us. We are his, we are his people, we are the sheep of his pasture. And if he wants to lead us down this path instead of the one you want to go down, then you follow him. We're from him to quote Romans 11:36 and through him and to him are all things. And to him be glory forever and ever. The scandal of you living life on this planet doing whatever you want and you think of the neighbor who is doing whatever he wants. You've got to see what an egregious thing that is. And when all of that changes and he comes back to the father and submits himself to the will of the father and says these hands are now to be used for God. This mind is to be used for God. These resources in my garage and my house are to be used for God. My career is to be used for God. All of a sudden now you're going to rejoice because you've seen the scandal and the egregious nature of self-indulgence. (46:58)

And if you want to think about us as Christians well I'm glad not a non-Christian anymore, you may be a Christian sitting here today, but the Bible says the temptation of you, cheating on God with the resources that he provides us is still there. 1 Corinthians 4:7 says everything you have has been given by the Lord. And then he says in 2 Corinthians 11, he says, I feel jealousy for you. I betroth you to Christ, present yourself to him as a pure virgin. I'm afraid that the serpent as he deceived Eve is cunning and is cunning to deceive you and that your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. And all I'm saying is you may be in the house, you may have a commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ but in your heart, be pulled away in your own thinking. Using things in your office, using things in your house, using things in your health that really have no reference at all to God, no thought of God, no thought of glorifying God even though you know all things are from him, through him and are supposed to be to him for his glory. 1 Peter 4:11 just so you know it's not just the Westminster confession that says this. 1



Peter 4:11 in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. (48:12)

Now that's not where we live, and I just got to talk to a strata of people that might be here this morning that are typified in Robert Bellah's research. I've recommended his books on the back before. A sociologist who just comments on sociological trends in our day. But he says 81% of Americans agree that a person should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs my themselves, independent of any influence by any church or any synagogue. 81% of American say that's how you ought to figure out your theology, on your own. A woman in that survey named Sheila, he reports in his book, was interviewed in this research and says, "Yeah, of course I believe in God." She says, "I can't remember the last time I went to church though. And my faith it's carried me along the way." I really think it's kind of a Sheila-ism, this is her name, Sheila. It's just my own little voice inside my heart. Well you can call that all you want, religion or belief in God but as so many people say when they tell you that they are spiritual but not religious. If you don't want the strictures of God's rules but you want some kind of fantasy that you have a connection with God, well then, you're just like that older brother deceived in sin thinking you have a foot in this thing, but in reality, your heart is so far from God, because you cannot be self-directed and self-indulgent and add a little shellac that we call god on the top. (49:35)

And we can't risk being wrong about this. Northwest Airlines long ago offered an unusual offer, for \$59 they offered this thing called the mystery fare. You could show up at the airport, this is before 9/11, but you could show up at the airport with your bags packed, not knowing where you're going, lay down your \$59 and they would send you somewhere that Northwest Airlines flies. This was hugely popular. I mean people lined up and they went after it. It was hugely popular when they announced it and when they tried it but it didn't last very long. Not surprising these buyers were very disappointed when they wanted to go to some exotic place and they ended up going to Minneapolis. Sorry, to all of our radio listeners in Minneapolis. There were people actually reported going down the terminals of these airports with a ticket to places like Minneapolis saying I'll trade it for anything, right? I don't know what, not to bash on Minneapolis but it's not Bermuda or Miami or whatever. The last thing you want is a ticket to a mystery destination. I mean we take the off ramp of temptation to follow our own self-directed sense of fulfillment. We may think when we die we're going to get on a plane and go somewhere and we hope it's a good place, but the only way to know for sure is to sign up and accord ourselves with the directives of what God calls us to, and we're going to learn about that next week. Depicted so graphically in verses 14 through 19, the son repenting. Repentance is the check-in, and the father's house is the destination. And I hope that's the reality for you. Let's pray (51:21)

God, just getting started in this fantastic parable, so famous not just in this world but certainly famous within our Christian experience. We love the story of the prodigal son, such a tender and compassionate reception the father gives the wayward sinner. And yet God we don't want to miss that really that it's the older brother and the younger brother were deceived by sin. And we want to make sure that we are guarding ourselves by the truth of your words that we don't fall to the same. God encourage us today because we've looked at the grief, the travesty, the scandal of sin. Encourage us as we think about those of us who are saved today that we've been freed from that and we can look back at our testimony and say how good it is to be back in the father house and as we stay here and stand here and fellowship with you every day in our prayer life and in our worship, our study of your word, I pray that our hearts would be fully engaged, we would not be tempted by the tempter and his cunning to be drawn away from a pure devotion to the Lord. Let us recognize that everything we have, everything we earn, everything we possess, is a gift from you. All of it called ultimately to glorify you. God dismiss us now with a sense of increased joy because of what we're missing, in Jesus name. Amen (52:45)