



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 80 “The Better Bigger Brother” By Pastor Jody May

Luke 15:11-24 ESV

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ 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.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

Intro: Illustration of my giant head and waiting on a helmet...

Mom - *While it takes a big man to offer an apology it takes an even bigger man to accept it.* – Translation, it’s hard saying “sorry” but it’s harder saying “don’t sweat it”. Because based on where one stands with self-image (how you see yourself), AND based on how you see others, all **determines how quick you get over offenses**. Not even slights of conduct, but just life, when it doesn’t go your way. Does your ego allow you to get over things quickly? That’s called **ENTITLEMENT**, believing that you are owed. The question though is “why” do you believe you are owed?

In Jesus’ day the **Pharisees** were the absolute ‘BEST’ there were when it came to **portraying a sense of entitlement**. They believed that because of their behavior, their works in the law, that made them righteous (ok with God). This perceived standing with God is what kept them always looking down on the common man and it’s what kept them mad at Jesus all the time. **They lived in such a way that they believed they were owed for their good behavior and their way of living was God’s reward for their behavior**. They were mad at Jesus because He challenged that, He was teaching that being in the Kingdom of God cannot be gained because of what you do, but it is given by the Father’s GRACE, which



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means EVERYBODY could get it! Instead of rejoicing over GRACE the Pharisees couldn't even see it, BECAUSE of their hyper-sense of entitlement.

This is where we are in the story today. We are in the **third act**, this is the section where the Pharisees would have perked up.

1. A Self-Righteous Stance

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ 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.’

They saw in the character of the Older brother the mirror image of themselves. He was the one that stayed home, did not squander the inheritance and worked the family business. This is the part of the story that they had been waiting for. They were expecting to see the older brother not only set the younger one straight, but they expected the father would be set straight too! He, the father, along with the brother, has shamed the family **AND** he's spending the older son's inheritance!? They know that he should be rewarded for his behavior but instead he was overlooked.

You also heard in the story today shock, anger, and dismay because the younger brother was enjoying a feast put on by the father. So, we have to stop right here, and do the flashback, so we can understand what is so shocking to this older brother.

The younger brother left home, and took his part of the inheritance, essentially treating his father as if he was dead. He went to a foreign land where no one knew him, where he could sow his wild oats and incur no shame. **But God**, in perfect discipline, gives the younger brother that which he longs for, the freedom to live as he wants and to indulge in every fleshly desire. By the end of his rebellion, he's living in mud mixed with poop, eating out of the same trough that pigs do. It was in this moment that he **came to his senses**, not about how it could all go back to the way it was if he just went home, NO, he remembered **how good**



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the father was, and knowing he deserved condemnation, went home just to see if perhaps if he could be hired as a day servant. He knows/learned, unlike the Pharisees and you will see unlike the older brother, that **all good things come by the Father based on the Father’s goodness not your behavior**. NO ENTITLEMNET here it had been burnt off – **here’s the blessing of that hard lesson**:

Romans 4:5 ESV

⁵And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness,

Then last week we saw the ultimate love of the Father, which represents God the Father. We see a man catch a glimpse of the son returning home and loses his mind in joy, takes on the shame and scorn of that town running and showing his legs, to get to his boy. Shielding his son from the shame and condemnation. He rewards the son with robe, ring, sandals, and a banquet. And then there is this beautiful picture of how God views those far from Him. The pharisees had been teaching for years that God’s wrath was on the sinner UNTIL you earned your grace, earn redemption. But here we see that the Father reinstates the son back to full family member again, to full privileges with no redemptive work done by the son, pure Grace.

So, what we have learned so far:

- God will give you your freedom and let you learn its’ not what you want.
- God will allow the world to teach you lessons preparing your heart for change.
- God saves you while you were a sinner with a regenerated mind fixed on Him.
- God does not require you to pay out redemption, that comes out of God’s accounts.
- God raises the dead to life and gives full family privileges.
- And by all three parables of the LOST we see God always REJOICES over their return, and it is the invite to do the same.



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You see, in Jesus telling this story about how the Father rejoices over finding the Lost, He is explaining what the **Pharisees were supposed to be doing** and why they wouldn't do it. Jesus is **enlightening finally to everyone**, what this Self-Righteous Stance, performed by the Pharisees, was all about. They had way too much **entitlement**, thought they alone had the love of the Father, that they had gained superiority by their lives of duty, and because of that they couldn't see that they **WERE AS LOST AS THE YOUNGER BROTHER.**

Where the Pharisees would have seen the older brother as the hero, perhaps the crowds were finally starting to see the older brother as the villain.

The older brother was the one to go and get the older brother and he didn't.

The older brother showed the younger brother that he meant nothing to him.

The older brother insulted the Father with a lack of respect for Him and what was important to him.

The stance of self-righteous behavior was a declaration that the older brother was not interested in the family, and had broken the law, loving others as self.

The older brother in the beginning of the story did not even try to stop his younger brother but let him leave. As well when the younger brother comes home the older brother was way out in the field, **which shows he too was far from home.**

In the previous two stories we can't miss the differences:

The Lost Sheep, the shepherd went looking.

The Lost Coin, the woman would not rest until it was found.

Then all were invited to celebrate finding the Lost.

Jesus is telling the comparison of these stories to show **no one went to look for the lost brother!**

GOSPEL CONVICTION: Family our greatest testimony, is not, “*look at how I am living*” but “*Look at how the Father is living through me*”. It means in our self-promoting culture of social media today don't be so quick to post information about yourself to show how you are comparing to others. Instead if we are to post things about our personal lives then think on how it should be a direct reflection of how the Father has loved us. One of the problems in the world



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today is that it sees the church and perceives no difference between them and the church/us. Our stances of self-righteousness have been displayed and recorded on the internet and it shows a bunch of people trying to justify themselves just like the world does, public declaration of works, just like a pharisee. And they watch that as we have no concern for loving our neighbors, the lost.

Now here’s come the **evidence of the entitlement:**

2. An Unjustified Anger

²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’

“²⁹ *Look, these many years*”. – Accusation, you old geezer, all these years.... It is the cry of a person that thinks that their life was wasted doing something. That if I had known you were going to do this, I would have left a long time ago. The older brother thinks that the Father owes him an **apology!**? Why is he so upset?

It’s not that you didn’t party with me but that you didn’t supply me with the goods to party with my friends, at least they would praise me! He doesn’t want the Father for the relationship, he was into routine to get the goods! He wanted the praise of his friends, he wanted to use the Father for his glory. **Accusation – you wasted my life!**

³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ He doesn’t even acknowledge the brother as family anymore, he cares not for the father’s judgment, forgiveness, and grace towards the sinner but still sees his brother as condemned and alienated. **Deut. 21:18** “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them”.... You would get stoned to death. – “where is justice dad!” - **Accusation - you’re not fair!**



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The tables have turned what the older son is now doing is shameful, it shames God, it shames the family name, it rejects the doctrine of the Imago Dei.

There is another serious misconception here, that the fattened calf was killed for the brother. **It was actually to celebrate the kindness, grace, and awesomeness of the Father.** He took on shame, He forgave a debt, this is comparable to the rejoicing on the year of jubilee when the slaves were set free. Everyone is fed from the father's table, from that calf, this whole meal and celebration is not about how good the son is it's about **how good the Father is!** The older Son wants nothing to do with it.

At this feast is not just guiltless townsfolk but sinners. They are all witnessing what the Father was like, they are seeing the blessing that it is to celebrate him, and the older brother can only show contempt for the father. **The one person that should be as ecstatic is the most disgusted.** Who is shaming who?

Christians we have to be careful here. Here in the midst of the church, we must be careful, when we find ourselves getting angry over how others are treated seemingly better than you. **When people who don't follow rules but still get noticed that's when those who serve the hardest can get the meanest.** Never forget the 'why' you serve, it is to discover and find that which was Lost so that your Father in heaven may be **glorified!**

Pastors are the worst at this, we accuse God of favoritism, we accuse God of not being fair, and we refuse to celebrate what happens in other churches. When you and me, forget about why we are to rejoice it is usually because we have fallen into unjustified anger, and that gets explained here in the last point. There is hope still for us to change.

3. A Reason to Rejoice

³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'



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³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, - Son, my child, *teknon*, endearing word for 'my child'. Even in this rebellious moment, shaming the father, refusing to do His will, making him come outside, He still calls him a loved child.

³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

It was fitting, it was proper, it was the right things to do so, the only reaction to have was to rejoice.

Then right here the story is ended without knowing what happened to the older brother. Did he go inside, did he honor the Father, did he reconcile with the younger brother, did he kiss and receive him in front of all the other guests?

Left to the pharisees here's the ending they most likely would have wrote.

So, the older brother, picked up a piece of wood, they beat the Father, and then executed the brother outside the town, and took control of the estate, and they kicked out all the guests. **Just a few months after this story they did just that.** They put the Son on the cross outside of town, the exact image of the Father, His representative, His firstborn, and they killed Him, believing that they forever sealed the affair of the estate. They believed they got rid of the old religion, the old myths that God was gracious and wanted to forgive sins, that He loved people, and that He desired to give grace. They sought to take control again of the estate, they worked to get their places of honor again among the town folk. **BUT that wasn't the ending was it? Because if that was the real ending we wouldn't be here.**

Jesus wrote the ending he just did it a few chapters later.

Luke 19:10 ESV

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the **lost.**"

And because of that the Lost; both the younger siblings that need saving from their sins and the older siblings needing saving from their self-righteousness. **We are saved by the Better Bigger Brother.**



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- When we have gone astray, when we have run away from home, when we indulge in all that life has to offer, Jesus pleads with us to stay, not to leave the father.
- When we insist, Jesus has given us His Word in the Bible for us to remember for when we will need it.
- When we are in our pig sties it is **Jesus now, who comes and gets us!** He picks us up, He extends the love of the Father to us.
- He pays what we owe to the farmer, our debtors, where we have squandered our inheritance, we don't worry about the cost.
- He pays the highest price so no one can claim us again, he shames Himself on a cross, to get us out of our death, he puts his back to the whip to keep us from feeling the sting of retribution and shame.
- Jesus honors the Father where all else failed, He glorifies Him finally as He deserves.
- Jesus throws the party, He takes off His Robe, and shares His ring for us to show that we are back in the family doing again the work of the Father.

Family, Jesus told us all this story so that until He comes back, we would know He is the **Better Bigger Brother**, and since He came the first time He must come again when the work of reclaiming is done but the work of recreation is to begin.

Next time though, for those that have not honored the Father, nor the invitation to come in, it is His job and delight to finally avenge the name of His father. And on that day, you will rejoice too, for God will be wholly glorified in His Justice and Grace! And we will be there to see it all, thanks to our Big Brother.

So, family today I just want to leave you with what we have learned these last few weeks and let you decide how you will respond.

- God Rejoices over Sinners/Lost when they come home.
- The expectation is for you to join Him, for it is the right thing to do.
- Jesus has come to save the Lost, He's a Bigger Better Brother.



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Let's thank the Father again for grace and let's thank Jesus for being what we needed, our Brother that came to save.

PRAY

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father, that in His wisdom and grace sent us the Son to do what others had failed to do.

Go in the name of the Son, that comes for us, enduring our shame, paying our price, and reunites us with our Father.

Go in the name and power of the HS, who enables us to respond in worship and gives us a heart to share the news of our Better Bigger Brother with the world.