

The Father's Joy: Embracing Grace and Celebrating Restoration | Luke 15:11-32

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[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I share sermons that balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.

Together, we'll explore Scripture using observation, interpretation, and application. This helps us discover practical ways to live out our faith every single day.

Let's dive in together into God's Word. Well, good morning, everyone. Let's go ahead and take a seat. We're going to go ahead and get started.

You know, can you believe it's ten days until Christmas? How many of you guys are counting the days? I know when I was growing up, I used to, my mom used to buy those little, their little advent calendars, and you had the little door things.

You open them, and sometimes you'd have different types of chocolates, or nuts, or whatever, and different things. I haven't done that in a long time. They still do that, right? All right. It's a real, just real good time, a real good excuse to have chocolates, too.

[1:11] Well, I'm really glad that you guys are all here today keeping warm. I know we've had the seasons change. It got a little warmer at 46 degrees. You know, praise God for that.

And so here we are today, it's still a little semi warmer, but you know, hey, we'll take it. We'll take anything that we've got. And so today it is the third Sunday of Advent where we are talking about joy.

We think of joy. We think about the joy, the inexpressible, the inexhaustible joy that comes from knowing the Lord. And knowing Jesus Christ, I cannot help but tell you, it is the greatest decision that you can make in this life that has eternal consequences.

We think of the Advent season. We think of the hope that comes from Jesus Christ. We think of the peace that surpasses all understanding. And we think of the inexhaustible, inexpressible joy that comes from Him.

When we think of that joy that we receive, we also have to think of the Father's joy. In our scripture reading today, we're going to turn through the Gospel of Luke chapter 15, verses 11 through 32.

[2:19] And what I want to do before we read, I want you to think for a moment. Realize that heaven, the angels, the Lord our God is full of joy when you become a believer.

Amen. When you believe in Jesus Christ, when you have that faith in Him, right, believing in the Lord and being saved, there is joy in heaven.

I want to show you real quick before we even start here. When we're talking about in Luke chapter 15, where Jesus says, right, before the parable of the lost coin, just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.

Do you understand the magnitude and the gravity of that? That's incredibly powerful that there's joy that is in heaven. When we go over the parable of the lost coin, we just did that very recently.

Jesus also says, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. And let us be reminded that when we think of repentance, it is the changing of our mind and our thoughts on who Jesus Christ is from just being a cool guy with a beard and long hair and walking around in a robe and sandals to something much greater than that.

[3:44] Now I know we can still think of him like that, but you've got to think beyond that, that Jesus is all that we need. He is our Savior. He is our Lord. And He is the way, the truth, and the life.

And so let's turn to this. It's page 1039 in your ESVP Bibles, or you are free to use whatever mobile device or whatever translation. Hopefully it's not a weird one out there, but let's turn to there.

So it's going to be verse 11. This is known, many of you guys know this, the parable of the prodigal son. You guys know that one? Maybe not. If you haven't, it's a real good story.

Maybe it's been a while since you've read this one. I know when we think of Sunday school, we think that's a very common story that's taught from Scripture. So it goes in here.

Let's start with verse 10, right? When Jesus is saying, just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents, and that helps paint the scene for what's happening here.

[4:45] And He said, there was a man who had two sons. So you got the younger and the older. The younger of them said to his father, Father, give me a share of property that is coming to me.

And he divided his property. The father divided the property between them. 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.

And when he had spent everything, oh, you know, he spent all of his inheritance, so to speak. It's all gone, right? He spent everything. A severe famine arose in that country, and he began to what? Began to be in need, or be needy, depending on the translation, right? So he went out and he hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him. Let's go to that picture, actually, while we're looking at this.

You see, I mean, he's got a bag of coins or whatever, right? Taking all that he has, right?

Representing that. And he's out there with the pigs when we think about this, right? He was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

[5:55] So he's in a really rough situation here. But when he came to himself, he said, how many of my fathers hired servants have more than enough bread? And here I am, right?

But here I perish here with hunger. He's realizing at that moment, I don't need to be sitting here with no pigs, right? I need to be sitting here.

My father treated the servants better than I'm being treated right now. I need to turn things around. I need to go back home, right? How many of my fathers hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger?

How many of my fathers have more than enough bread, and I am going to go back home, right?

And I am going to go back home, and I'm going to go back to my father. And I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

Go back for a second in verse 14. Something I want us to take note here, it's not necessarily in your notes. Very often when you see in Scripture, when there is mentioning of a famine, we can look at the desert community, right, when we think of the lacking of food in famine, but also think for a second, the spiritual famine.

[7:05] How very often there are times where we are in the wilderness or we are in a desert. How many of you have experienced a spiritual famine before?

It's something to think about because in this story, you have the guy who's truly hungry, you need something to eat, but also think of the spiritual famine that might have been there, when Jesus is talking.

Let's go back to verse 19. So I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.

It's this place of humility. It's the hitting of the rock bottom as it were. Now, I don't know if many of us have hit rock bottom to the point where we're eating with a bunch of pigs, but certainly there have been times for some of us.

Maybe you have thought of a point where you were dining with pigs, so to speak. And so it's going on at verse 20. He arose and he came to his father.

[8:03] And while he was still a long way off, what happened? His father saw him and was angry? Oh, no. He says his father saw him and what, felt compassion and ran over to him.

So it's not like he's like, oh, there's my son. He's coming on over. No, he felt compassion and he ran over. He ran and embraced his son and kissed him.

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. But the father said to his servants, bring quickly the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and his shoes on his feet and bring the fat and calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate.

Verse 24, this is very important. For this my son was what? Dead and is alive again.

He was lost and he is now found. And they began to celebrate. That's how we understand this parable. But the son was once lost.

[9:12] He ran off. He squandered his money. Reckless living. I mean, we think of reckless driving. How many of us have been a reckless liver before, living this life?

You don't want to be living your life recklessly like that, but sometimes we do and often we do. But here is a time where the father is recognizing.

He was lost, but he is now found. He was dead, but he is now alive. Now his older son was in the field and he came and he drew near to the house and he heard music and dancing.

For some of us when we're in the field, we hear music and dancing. We kind of want to know what's going on, right? We want to go and maybe partake in the music or whatever is going on there. We want to know what's going on. He called one of his servants and asked, what these things meant? And he said to him, your brother has come and your father has killed the fat and calf because he has received him back safe and sound.

[10:11] But he, the older brother, was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and treated him. 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. But when this son of yours came, that's not a nice thing to say, right? When this son of yours came back, right, who had devoured this property with prostitutes, you killed the fat and calf for him.

And he said to them, the father said to the older son, son, you are always with me and all that is mine is what is yours.

It was fitting to celebrate and be glad for this, your brother, it's a repetition like we were finding. This is emphasizing the importance of this parable.

Your brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and now he is found. And when we read this, right, this, this parable is the third of many parables highlighting God's joy, the Lord's, the father's joy in redeeming the lost, knowing that in heaven, the angels and even God, the father is celebrating when we were once lost, when we were once in darkness like vessels that were put in a place where they shouldn't belong, being redeemed and being reconciled to God, the father, knowing that there's an invitation for all of you to believe in Jesus Christ.

[11:47] And there's a celebration in that. That goes to show how not only how important it is when we think of the spiritual, when we think of heaven, but we have to think for us how important it is for people to believe in Jesus Christ, to recognize Him as Savior and Lord.

So when someone believes and they say, I've believed in Jesus Christ, I am now a Christian, I believe in the death, burial and resurrection of Him, we should celebrate that.

That's how important it is. It's important for us to celebrate that. And Jesus is telling the story to emphasize the amount of grace that God has for us.

And I want this to be a reminder for all of us. It doesn't matter what your background is. It doesn't matter what you have been through. And it doesn't matter what you are going through.

Maybe you, maybe you have been, or maybe you are with the pigs. Maybe you're at that low point where you're thinking, maybe I need to go to the Father whose arms are wide open, ready to receive those to come to Him.

[13:01] Do you understand the importance of that? So we think here the younger son's rebellion, right? The younger son, he demanded his

inheritance.

Maybe think about this on the surface, we can't help but think of our own lives. If you have an inheritance for your kids and you want it all now, what are you going to do with it, bud?

But it's looking beyond that. It's looking beyond money. So the younger son demands his inheritance and he squanders it.

It says right in there, it has to do with prostitutes and stuff. That is reckless living. And we see that, let's go back to that, the picture with the son, the one before that.

He probably left so proud, so ready to go out on his own. We have to think about this as our reliance on God the Father.

[14:02] How very often for us, we like to do things on our own, don't we? It's the American way, right? Pull ourselves up from our bootstraps and we go make a name for ourselves.

But when it comes to matters of spirituality, we have to rely on the Lord. And this is a scenario of someone who left the presence of the Father, who left the Father and tried doing it on his own. And there was a consequence that was from that. And so after living that fast paced life, living in the highway as it were, think of reckless driving, reckless living, he gets humbled.

How many of us have lived life in the fast lane before? Did you eventually crash? You don't answer that, okay?

But for a lot of us, for many of us, we live life in the fast lane, I think of that song, right? Life in the fast lane.

[15:08] Eventually there comes a point where you get humbled, where you hit that low point and it says here, right? His repentance and in desperation, in that famine, in that time where he's hungry.

He recognizes, he realizes his need. He realizes what he had and certainly what he could have in returning to the Father.

And so he hopes to be accepted just as a servant. Talk about humility. I mean, we can think of a lot of initial points here when we think of family bonds, if we've done our family wrong.

We can also think of if we've done the Lord wrong. Maybe it's time for you to think of your trajectory and what path you're on.

And in realizing in that sense of humility, the Father runs to meet him. The Father embraces him and celebrates the return with a feast with a celebration.

[16:14] When we think about the grace and love that God has for us, it's love that's everlasting. It's love that's unlike anything else and that joy that the Father has for the Son returning is remarkable.

And so we have the older son's resentment then, where he struggles. Some of us identify with the younger son, yeah?

Some of us we identify with that guy. And some of us identify with the older son and they, well, wait just a minute. You seen this kid?

Do you see what he did? And we kind of do this over compulsive making up words here, over compulsive comparison disorder, right?

Where we compare our lives to someone else. We have to think of our own backstory. How you come to the Lord is unique to you, but what's important is that both sons need to check themselves.

[17:22] There's a famous saying out there, check yourself before you wreck yourself, right? And in the case of the older son, he needs to check his pride.

And in the younger son, well, he's already recognizing he did wrong here. Instead of looking at both of the sons look towards the father in this case.

The father is telling the older son, look, everything I have is yours. You're already in. You're already a part of this. The younger son, unfortunately he wasn't.

But now he's alive and now he is found. I know as when I was younger, I struggled with this parable. I struggled so much.

I thought, wait, just a minute. There's so many people. You mean to tell me if you lived a life full of sin and prostitutes and all these people that if they come to the Lord at the very end, they'll be saved?

[18:24] Absolutely. The thief on the cross is one of your great examples. In recognizing that even on your deathbed before the moment you die, you still have an opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ.

That is a love that is unlike any other love. Knowing that that grace is extended for everyone. It can be hard on human standards, I admit.

But when we think of matters of God, well, that's something that's an entirely different matter. And so what does all this mean? Let's go on from here. The lesson here, what can we learn?

What can we interpret from these verses? The first thing that comes up is the Father's joy in restoration. Was the Father angry when the Son returned? Well, no.

He was joyful, right? God rejoices in the restoration of sinners and welcomes them back with unconditional love. What a beautiful example that we can see here in this parable.

[19:28] Someone that does such horrible things, but yet doesn't hold it against them, receives him back. What a powerful parable. What powerful verses when we think about, well, maybe you've been recklessly living.

Maybe you need to realize how joyful the Father will be when you come to Him. And that same joy that comes from the Father, we celebrate in that joy.

We think of this Christmas season of being joyful for what God has done for us by sending His Son. So the Father's celebration, right?

It's God's joy in restoring sinners to Himself. We think of this idea of unconditional love. We think of being reconciled unto God.

We want people to be reconciled. We want people to be restored to the Lord. And God's love is unconditional. He meets us in our brokenness and welcomes us with open arms.

[20:30] The second thing then, grace is a what? It's a gift, not a reward. Ooh, what does that mean, right?

The free gift of salvation. It's about what has been done, not about what we can do. We have to know the difference.

The younger son's return, it shows that restoration, it's based on God's grace, the Father's grace towards the Son, not on what He did, right?

It's not about what the younger son did. It's about the Father's love and celebrating in that joy in the restoration of the Son.

The older son's resentment reveals the danger of self-righteousness. Sometimes that can blind us in being joyful. It's hard. I don't like that part, but it's true though.

[21:36] It keeps us in check though. And so I want you to remember this, that grace is a free gift. It is that invitation. It's not about what you can do.

It's about what has been done. We move on to the next one then, that true joy is found in reconciliation. The Father's words to the older son, it shows that joy, right?

There's that joy from celebrating this idea of restoration and reconciliation. Because the Son realized He couldn't do it on His own, and He needed to return to the Father.

And in the same way, joy in heaven, joy with the angels, joy with the Lord, and knowing that someone is being restored is very powerful for us.

And this parable, I really hope this makes us to reflect and think for a moment how we are to respond to God's grace, knowing that God's arms are open.

[22:36] There is an opportunity for you to come to the Lord. Are you going to respond? Do you recognize there's maybe pigs in your life situation?

I don't want to say there's a bunch of pigs around you. That wouldn't be right. What I'm trying to say though is, maybe you're at a low point in your life. Maybe you need to recognize that.

And the next thing then is the proclamation of joy in Christ, where we think of the coming of Christ, right? That is the ultimate proclamation of joy.

The coming of Christ brings joy, peace, and salvation to all who believe. That's the reason to be joyful. Knowing Jesus being born in the manger, being the fulfillment of prophecy, we should celebrate that.

That's why we celebrate this season, right? His the season. That Jesus is, right? The famous saying, Jesus is the reason for the season. We think about that and the advent reminds us that the

joy of reconciliation is, well, it's part of the gospel story.

[23:47] Knowing that Jesus was born in that manger, changing the course of history, making salvation available for all who believe. That's something to be joyful for.

And if, if you're not, you got to really think again. And so in all this then, how can I apply? How can I live this out? All right, pastor, you told me about the father's love for the son who ran off and squandered his money and lived recklessly.

And you talked about the older son who seemed to be resentful and very prideful as it were. What do I do with this? This is very important, right?

We observe the text. We read it together. We look at the lessons that we can think of in our personal walk with the Lord, but the other part is what we do with this.

The first thing is celebrate the joy of reconciliation. It's a call for you to rejoice in God's joy. If God's celebrating, if heaven is celebrating, you should too.

[24:53] You should celebrate in the joy when a sinner repents, when there's a changing of the mind, when someone comes to believe in the Lord.

And so take time this week to reflect on God's joy in restoring you to himself. Rejoice in his unconditional love and grace.

And I challenge you, share this joy with someone in your life. Maybe you know someone who's like the older son.

Maybe you know someone who's like the younger son, who we can think of more people like the younger one, but there's also a call for the older son.

Matters of the heart. Check yourself. How are you out with the Lord? Are you returning to the Lord? Do you realize God has greater plans for your life?

[25:53] The next thing then is a difficult one is let go of anger and resentment. This would be more for the older ones. Release any bitterness or self-righteousness that robs you of God's joy.

And that's kind of the thing we can think of with the older son is that there is that sense of resentment. Sometimes we can be so filled with anger that it robs us of our joy.

We haven't experienced that before, have we? I'm sure we all have. One point or another. We've been so filled with anger that it, that's all that occupies your mind and your heart.

It's not easy. This is not an easy thing to do, letting go of anger or resentment. But that would be what we can do if you identify more with the older son.

The next thing then, this is a good one, extend grace to others to forgive and celebrate the victories and restoration in others' lives.

[26:56] When there is a new believer, someone who is ready to receive that free gift of salvation, we've got to celebrate in that.

You just have to. That's only the most, the biggest decision you can make. It affects this life in the next one. Why wouldn't we celebrate that? That's something for us to remember, for us to keep in mind, right?

Like the father in the parable, be quick to forgive and ready to celebrate the victories and restoration in others' lives and use this advent season.

Use this as that opportunity to reach out to someone who has been distant. Maybe it's a family member. Maybe it's someone very near and dear to your heart, someone who has been distant and is experiencing that.

The next thing then, they're telling me my time's almost up. Proclaim the joy of Christ's coming. Share the joy of the gospel intentionally this advent season.

[28:01] Invite someone to church or share the story. Maybe share the story of this parable. Maybe share in the gospel message. But be relational, be intentional.

It's not about shoving faith down someone's throat. It's about relationships, my friends. That's very, it's very good for us.

And finally, reflect the father's heart. Show what? Compassion, what else?

Patience and love embodying God's grace in your interactions. Because as we believe in the Lord and we're saved, we're called to grow as individuals.

We're called to grow collectively as the body of Christ and to go out into the world and exhibit the light, love, and truth of Jesus Christ in what we say and in what we do in our everyday interactions. [28:59] And that looks like, well, if you're a student, how you interact with other students in your work, how do you deal with that micromanaging boss?

I know, right? How do you deal with the difficult coworker? How do you deal with that obnoxious teacher? We've all had that. If you haven't, I commend you.

But it's exhibiting that, right? It's pointing people to Christ just like that famous song, They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love. They will know we are Christians by us being ambassadors for Christ, putting on the new self, being restored.

Along the fact that you're saved by grace through faith, wouldn't you want to share in that? Wouldn't you want to exhibit compassion and aren't we called to be more, to be molded, to be more holy? The process of sanctification as it were? To be more following in the footsteps of Christ. So we reflect the Father's love. We exhibit that to others.

[30:11] The love of Christ, the grace that comes from Him, the joy that comes from Him. We are to mirror that and show that to others so that others will see that there is a better way in Jesus Christ.

And as we lit that third candle, let us remember that true joy is found in being reconciled with God, being restored unto God.

The Father's celebration in the parable mirrors the joy of heaven over every sinner who repents. May this joy overflow in our lives and inspire us to extend grace to others and to celebrate restoration and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

And as we close this week, I challenge you, reach out to someone who needs to hear the good news of the gospel, who needs to hear about the joy of reconciliation.

Share your story of how God has worked in your life. This world needs transformation. This world needs restoration.

[31:26] I mean, hearing about all the UFOs and all this stuff in the sky, I don't know what in the world is going on. But quite honestly, we've got to focus and set our minds on things that are higher, not be distracted by the worries of this world.

Let's close together and let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank you. We thank you for the joy that comes in knowing who you are.

May we celebrate in this joy of being restored to you. May we have that heart like you have. Help us to rejoice in your grace and share that joy with other people.

May this season, Father, may we recognize that this Advent season, this is a time of celebration and proclamation as we await for the celebration of the coming, the first coming of your Son Jesus Christ.

But also, as we in the same way patiently wait for the promises and prophecies to be fulfilled of the second coming.

[32:36] We love you, Father. We praise you. We glorify you and we honor you. We thank you for sending your Son. We thank you for this joy that's inexhaustible.

We love you so much. Thank you for just allowing us to be together, to sing songs together, and to go into this parable, showing the love and the opportunity that we have to come to you.

And I pray, Father, if there's anyone who identifies with the older Son, who's struggling with bitterness and resentment, that you work in and through them. And if there are people who are more like the younger Son, who may be recklessly living, we pray that you will lead and guide them to be reconciled to you and restored to you.

In all of these things, we pray and we all say together, amen, amen. Thank you for listening for this week's message from Ontario Community Church.

I pray that you are encouraged and strengthened in your walk with Christ. For more sermons and resources, visit ontariocommunitychurch.org.

[33:55] May God bless you as you live out His grace and truth every single day.