

Lost & Found | A Son's Story, Part 2 (Luke 15.25-32)

Introduction

Main Idea- Jesus' open-ended conclusion to the parable leaves room for those listening to consider their response to God's work- will they continue to remain outside in frustration or will they engage with joy?

Reviewing the Father's Kindness (v.25-28)

- Older isn't always better
- The stunning kindness of the Father

What's Behind This Reaction (v.29-30)

- The Problem with Enoughness
 - *You may have noticed that the strands of secularity we've explored thus far all operate more or less identically. They cast a vision of enoughness and then implore us to realize that vision with forbearance, grit, and hard currency, for the sake of existential reward. If you eat well enough, love well enough, parent well enough, stay busy enough, you be enough. This is the promise at the heart of what we might call a religion of law, and it applies to every replacement religion under the sun. . . Furthermore, as anyone who has tried to hang their self-regard on a target of secularity finds out, enough turns out to be a mirage, ever retreating into the distance.- David Zahl, Secularity*
 - The older son's complaint is based on this need to validate his effort and his morality.

A Reminder in Place of Rebuke (v.31-32)

- The Father's response is based on relationship and contentedness

Implications and Practices

- ***Jesus' open-ended conclusion to the parable leaves room for those listening to consider their response to God's work- will they continue to remain outside in frustration or will they engage with joy?***
- Accepting the invitation

Discussion Questions

1. Many of us tend to focus on the younger son and the father in this parable, but the older son is just as important of a character.
 - a. What strikes you about his character?
 - b. Do you have an easier time relating to the older or the younger brother? Why is that?
2. Jesus ends the story with a cliffhanger: what will the older brother choose to do? In this way, Jesus challenges the pharisees (who are like the older brother) with the same decision. How will they respond to God's acceptance and joy over the lost who have returned?
 - a. Why was it so difficult for the older brother to be able to accept his younger brother back and welcome his return? Why was he so offended by the father's kindness and generosity towards the younger brother?
3. The older brother complains that he has always obeyed the father while the younger son hasn't. The father responds, you have always been with me. The older son complains that the father had never even given him a goat, and the father says that all he has is the son's.
 - a. What do the older son's complaints reveal about how he is approaching his relationship with his father? What is he focused on?
 - b. What do the father's responses reveal about how the father is approaching his relationship with his son?
4. What's the difference between being with someone versus doing something for them?
 - a. Which is more central to a healthy relationship? Where should we start?
 - b. What is your default when it comes to relationships: being with or doing for?
 - c. How does this shape the way you approach your relationship with God?
 - d. What does it look like to approach our relationship with God in a way where our focus is just to be with him?
 - e. How would this kind of relationship impact our decisions and actions?
5. What does it look like to just be with others versus doing things for them?
 - a. How does this shape the way we approach evangelism and discipleship?