

From the Father's House to the Far Country. And Back?

Luk 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

Luk 15:12 And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.

Luk 15:13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

Luk 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

Luk 15:15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

Luk 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

Luk 15:17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

Luk 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

Luk 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

Luk 15:20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

Luk 15:21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

Luk 15:22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

Luk 15:23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

Luk 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Luk 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

Luk 15:26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

Luk 15:27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

Luk 15:28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

Luk 15:29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

Luk 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Luk 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

Luk 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

What follows is not meant as an interpretation of the above parable. Rather I wish to use it as a backdrop to something which is relevant to many of us in this time, in the affluent West.

When we are called by the Father to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, the Christ, we who obey are born from above of the Holy Spirit, and come into the Father's household, as of birthright. We who obey the good news of the kingdom of heaven are given the authority of the sons of God. We are made welcome and sharers in the inheritance of the sons of God in the Christ, Jesus. All that the Father has is ours, Amazing grace! You could imagine that we'd never tire of all the riches that are ours in the heavenly realms. But apparently we do. Familiarity, apparently, can breed contempt.

The things that cause us to choose to leave the safety and security of the Father's house for an adventure out in the far country may be a mystery. What attracts one person may leave another

cold. We are all different, yet all potential victims of the allure of this present world.

One thing for sure, we cannot be in both places at once! Either we are dwelling in the heavenly realms, where Christ is seated, or we are making our home in the far country that is this present age. One or the other.

However we get there, once in the far country we soon find that there is plenty to keep us occupied. Novelty is very attractive, we all love something new, something dramatic, something mysterious. Depending on our tastes we will probably be drawn to various and differing interests. There are plenty of pursuits, economic, religious, sporting, political, artistic and scientific to name a few. In case you're surprised at religious pursuits being one of this world's lures, be aware, religion is one of the most powerful tools of the enemy of men's souls. Whatever our taste, there is a religious organization or movement ready to draw us in. There will be a big pull towards "joining a citizen of that country".

Apparently we have to come to the end of our resources in order to see sense! Eventually we may realize that what we are getting from the world just doesn't cut it. We may remember that back at the Father's house, even on our worst days it was so much better than what the world can offer. Why, at the Father's right hand, there are pleasures for evermore. There are the rivers of living water, the times of refreshing, the peace that passes understanding, the joy unspeakable and full of Glory!

The way back to the Father's house is always open. The way is Jesus.

Repenting in the Greek form of the gospel text has the literal sense of "changing one's mind".

"And when he came to himself he said" (to himself and to God, perhaps?) "I will arise and go to my father." This is a good illustration of what we term repentance. A change of plan. A new direction.

Making the decision to cease and desist from the current course, in order to head back to the Father's house. This is a matter of life and death. For, to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life. Friendship (love of) the world is enmity with God. He does not become our opponent, but rather we become His.

Living at the Father's house is an experience, not a theological stance. We can taste and see, that the Lord is good.

When we return, there is a time of whooping it up joy. We are cleaned up and clothed in garments of righteousness, imputed by grace, the mercy of God.

We are given the ring of the authority of the sons of God, Christ in us, the hope of glory.

We are kitted out for every good work that the Father may ask of us, shoes fit for purpose. The Father's house is a place of productive employment.

In my life I can empathize with the prodigal son. Having been wonderfully called and born anew from above by the Holy Spirit it was not very long before I found myself not living in the heavenly realms, where Christ is seated, but finding my life in this present world. It included going to church, Bible reading, tithing, prayer times etc but even Jehovah's witnesses have all that!

It was when the Lord showed me that His intention for me was to stick to Jesus and follow Him only that I knew I had settled for something else. I had become a follower of men, not led by the Holy Spirit.

We dwell in the heavenly realms by the Spirit. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. What is seen is temporal, what is unseen is eternal. What is unseen is more real than that which is seen.

Will we come to ourselves? Will we rise and go back to the Father's house?

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