

CHOOSE YOUR STORY:

Two Options To Choose From

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

ATTENTION:

Your story is much more than one event/decision

- Our stories are the accumulation of lots of events/decisions.
 - It begins with birth and soon moves to the daily: encounters, events, choices, and reactions to the circumstances of life that come our way.

ATTUNE:

Today we're looking at a parable told by Jesus where He unfolds the stories of a couple of fictional brothers:

- The story is, "*The Parable of the Prodigal Son*," Jesus in [Luke 15:11](#) speaks of two sons
 - The parable unfolds their stories.
 - We have romanticized this parable by focusing all our attention on the younger of the two brothers.
 - We imagine the hearers' eyes filled with tears as they hear how God always welcomes us when we come home from the far country.
 - But it's likely that the result of Jesus telling this parable was that some of those who heard were actually offended, and angry.
 - His purpose was not to warm hearts, but to challenge the Pharisees and teachers of the law and their approach to God.
 - **He will tell the stories of 2 kinds of people, 2 kinds of "lostness" and running from God, but only one way home.**

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

- At the beginning of [Luke 15...](#)
 - The Pharisees and teachers of the law were complaining about Jesus - tax collectors and sinners were gathering around to hear him.
 - These two kinds of people = to the two brothers in parable.
 - Tax collectors/sinners = younger brother in the parable.
 - Engaged in immoral, irreligious wild living ([v.13](#)).
 - They were strongly attracted to Jesus.

- The Pharisees and the teachers of the law are like the elder brother in the parable.
 - They lived the lives of doing good, being good, etc.
 - They are devoted to obeying the Word of God.
 - They pray and worship constantly.
 - These "**elder brother types**" were shocked by Jesus' ministry!
 - He attracted those who most offended these "**elder brother types**" = Pharisees/teachers of the law.
- It's always the "**younger brother types**" who connected with Jesus and the "**elder brother types**" who didn't.

TWO KINDS OF APPROACHES

- Jesus shows us a father with two sons who are actually both equally alienated from the father/God.
 - One has run far away
 - The **elder brother** is just as alienated from the father.
 - According to [Lk 15:20, 28](#) the father had to **go out** to both sons.
 - An important image of this parable:
 - One of his sons is a very good person, one is a very wicked person, but in the end, it is the evil son who comes in to the father's celebration feast, and it is the good son who refuses.
 - Why does the elder brother stay out?
 - [29 But he replied to his father, 'Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends.](#)*
[Luke 15:29](#)
 - It's not his badness keeping him out, but his "goodness."
 - It is not his sins that are keeping him from sharing in the feast of the father as much as his "righteousness – self-righteousness"

TWO KINDS OF RUNNING

- What is this gospel way of approaching God – running to God?
 - The **elder brother type** is a man who approaches God believing that the way to approach God is to avoid sin.
 - If I feel I am a good person

- I look to Jesus as Example, Helper, Strength — but I don't need to completely rely on Him.
- Jesus is indebted to hear my prayers, protect me and reward me.
- This is clearly the attitude of the elder brother.
 - Why is he so angry with the father?
 - He thinks he has the right to tell the father what to do with his robes, rings, and calves.
 - He is just as resentful of the father's control as his younger brother when he insisted on his inheritance and left for the far country.
 - At heart they were the same
 - Both were trying to escape the authority of the father,
 - Both resented his control and rebelled.
 - One did it by breaking all the father's rules
 - The other did it by keeping them.
- Two approaches to God?
 - The **elder brother types** obey God to get control over Him, and to get things from Him.
 - I have been good to obey God so He must look favorably on me.
 - The Gospel calls us to obey God in order to have God.
 - The Gospel = being saved by grace and obey him out of a desire to love and please and draw closer to the one who saved them.
- Another way to consider is ask, "Why do we obey OR sin?"
 - Until the gospel changes our hearts, the reason for either can be the same.
 - The younger brother and the elder brother had the wealth of the father as their main objective.
 - They wanted his things, but not him.
 - The **younger brother's** sins allowed him to get his money and do what he wanted with it.
 - The **elder brother's** righteousness was motivated by his desire for his father's things.
 - Their real joy resided in the things, not in the father.
- In Jesus' ministry the...
 - **Younger brother types** are generally more open to gospel love/forgiveness/graciousness than **elder brother types**.
 - Younger brothers have literally run from the father

- physically and morally = So it's easier for them to see their need. Example: Sinners that were drawn to Jesus.
 - Older brothers are running away from God yet are physically and morally close.
 - So it's hard for the **elder brother types** to believe they are running from God! Example: Pharisees
- There are two kinds of "running from God."
 - You can run away by breaking the rules or keeping them.

TWO KINDS OF LOST

- It's typical for people to think of lost people as wild - out of control.
 - Whose body and spirit are broken through wild lives.
 - The younger brother's life is an example of this lostness."
- **Elder brother type** - Basing justification on sanctification:
 - 1. Can be impatient, unhappy, insecure, insensitive to the struggles of others.
 - Anger about how his life is going (*v.28 — became angry*).
 - Angry that his brother had come home!
 - 2. Joyless, mechanical obedience.
 - Notice what the **elder son** says, *I have been slaving many years for you (v.29)*.
 - **Elder brother obedience** treats God as a means to an end.
 - Not doing good out of a delight in goodness for its own sake or for the pleasure of God.
 - Instead, you do it joylessly and slavishly.
 - But Christians are filled with amazement at the grace of God and obey out of delight in pleasing Him.
 - 3. Coldness to **younger brother types**.
 - *this son of yours (v.30)*.
 - The person changed by the gospel is always disposed toward concern for the lost.
 - Not feeling better than anyone - Treat others with hope.
 - 4. A lack of assurance of the father's love.
 - *You never threw me a party (v.29)*.
 - There will always be anxiety, fear and uncertainty in your relationship with God as an **elder brother type**.

- 5. An unforgiving - judgmental spirit.
 - Lack the emotional humility to say, "I'm no different."
 - Look at the sinner, "I could never do that!"
 - My sin's not as bad as their sin.

PROJECT:

- The story we have considered this morning is a story of choices:
 - The younger brother's choices:
 - Led him on a journey of rebellion – indulgence – promiscuity – poverty – awakening – humility – repentance – restoration – renewal – celebration...
 - (AFTER GOING THROUGH THESE NOW ASK IF YOU SEE THAT YOU TOO ARE MAKING A STORY FROM YOUR OWN DECISIONS, ACTIONS AND REACTIONS.)
 - (THEN DO THE SAME WITH THE OLDER BROTHERS EXAMPLE)
 - The older brother's choices:
 - Led him on a journey of servitude – self-righteousness – anger – bitterness – confrontation – disappointment

ACTION:

- Choosing your story will take you through your own Prodigal son/daughter story.
- Essential to your story is the same as the essential of the prodigals' stories = God
 - The God of this story:
 - God of free choices
 - God of longing expectation for us to come home
 - God who runs to receive the rebellious when come home
 - God who is full of compassion
 - God who celebrates the return of lost son

God who confronts the self-righteous with a call to love imperfect others.

All Of This Brings Us Back To This Vital Truth:

**YOU GET TO CHOOSE YOUR STORY!
... EVERY DAY!
CHOOSE WISELY!**