

☞ The Road to Renewal

Luke 15:11-24

The story of the Prodigal Son needs no introduction. It is probably the most famous parable in the Bible. Jesus introduces us to three characters: the father and two sons and we usually focus on the one son that squandered his inheritance. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the story that we forget who the main character is. It is not the elder brother. It is not the Prodigal Son. The main character in this story is the Father! It's a picture of God... God is standing "at the end of the road" watching for you to come home! He wants our renewal even more than we do! The Road to Renewal begins with...

☞ Realization v. 17

The Bible says, "He came to his senses." Some people have to go a long way down before they look up! Sometimes we aren't even fully aware of our true condition.

Revelation 3:1-3

...the church in Sardis write... you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. **2**

☞ **Wake up!** Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. **3 Remember**, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

The Prodigal "woke up" and remembered. He realized his physical condition.

- This young man was hungry!
- This young man was thirsty!
- This young man was flat broke!
- This young man was friendless!
- This young man was away from home!

He realized one man could change all of that - his father.

Last week we talked about A Heart After God... one thing it does is consider the past. Remember how good things used to be? Remember experiencing the presence and power of God? Don't you want that again? Let's be real... we need renewal; and God is the one who can give renewal to us.

☞ Resolution v. 18

He made a decision to get up and go to his father.

He resolved to repent:

- To his earthly father
- To his Heavenly Father.

☞ We also must **resolve to go after God**. Genuinely make a decision and stick to it.

☞ We must get rid of our own fleshly efforts and learn to **rely completely on God**. It's painful to admit you can't do it. Our pride wants to be successful on our own, but we must come to a place of total and utter dependence upon God. The Prodigal realized the depth of the problem he had gotten himself into, and he resolved to go home to the one person who could fix his problem – his Father.

☞ **Repentance** v. 19

True repentance is more than saying, "I'm sorry". True repentance begins with a change in your thinking, which then leads to a change in your behavior.

☞ **Stop your Stinkin' Thinkin'**. Basically, stinkin' thinkin' is opposite of what God thinks and is very self-focused. This young man thought he could make it on his own. He thought his way was best, but now his thinking is changing. He's realizing he was wrong and it was actually pretty good back home. Dad wasn't so dumb after all! This happens to a lot of rebellious teenagers after they've experienced life on their own for a while. Sometimes even long-time believers behave the way this Prodigal did. We wander away from God and life gets rough. We need to repent and change the way we think, but it's more than just a new way of thinking...

Acts 26:20

☞ I preached that they should repent and **turn to God** and prove their repentance by their deeds. *(true repentance will result in a change of behavior)*

--C. S. Lewis... Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement; he is a rebel who must lay down his arms ... This process of surrender - this movement full speed astern - is what Christians call repentance. Now repentance is no fun at all. It is something much harder than merely eating humble pie. It means unlearning all the self-conceit and self-will that we have been training ourselves into for thousands of years. It means killing part of yourself, undergoing a kind of death.

☞ **Return** v. 20

☞ What did Dorothy say in the Wizard of Oz? **There is no place like home!** Church,

there's no place like home in the Father's house. Worldly pleasures may look inviting, but there really is no place like home!

This young man resolved to go home. He wasn't going home in pride. He was going home in humility. He realized just how badly he'd messed up! So, he isn't going to stay where he is; he is going to return.

A visitor at a fishing dock asked an old fisherman who was sitting there, "If I were to fall into this water, would I drown?" It was a weird way of asking how deep the water was, but the fisherman had a good answer. "Naw," he said. "Fallin' into the water doesn't drown anybody. It's staying under it that does." Falling into sin doesn't condemn anybody, but staying in it does.

--DL Moody... Man is born with his face turned away from God. When he truly repents, he is turned right round toward God; he leaves his old life.

☞ For some, it's simply a matter of **making a U-turn** and returning home to the Father's house. And the return leads to...

☞ **Reconciliation** v. 20

This is my favorite part of this story. When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. He had to be looking for him to see him! When your child is playing in the big game or in the school band, you can always spot them, can't you? Even if you're a long way off, you can pick them out of the crowd. Why? Because they're your kid and you know them! The Father is looking for your return. He wants you to be reconciled.

- The father had compassion.

2 Corinthians 1:3

☞ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of compassion** and the God of all comfort...

- The father threw his arms around him!
- The father kissed his son!
- The father ran to the son!

*When God Ran (Phillips, Craig and Dean)
The day I left home, I knew I'd broken His heart.
And I wondered then, if things could ever be the same.
Then one night, I remembered His love for me.
And down that dusty road, ahead I could see,*

*It was the only time, It was the only time I ever saw Him run.
And then He ran to me, He took me in His arms,
Held my head to His chest, Said "My son's come home again!"
Lifted my face, Wiped the tears from my eyes,
☞ With forgiveness in His voice He said "Son, do you know **I still love You?**"
He caught me by surprise. And He brought me to my knees.
When God ran, I saw Him run to me.
I was so ashamed, all alone, and so far away.
But now I know, that He's been waiting for this day.*

God wants reconciliation even more than you do. He's watching and waiting for you to come home again. He doesn't want to ruin you; he wants to restore you.

☞ **Restoration** v. 22-23

The Father restored the son.

- He ordered the best robe be brought for his son.
- A ring be brought for his son.
- The best sandals be brought for his son.
- The best calf be brought for his son.
- The father commanded a feast in honor of his son.

☞ **God only wants the best for us.** I'm sure in that day and culture there were different levels of attire. The father didn't put him in servant's clothing; he put him in the best. God doesn't keep us at arm's length. He doesn't demote us to second-class citizens. He welcomes us home with open arms and full restoration.

Jeremiah 15:19

If you repent, I will restore you

Micah 7:18

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of ☞ his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but **delight to show mercy.**

☞ **Rejoicing** v. 24

- The father saw his son come back from the dead.
- The father saw his lost son be saved.
- The father threw a big party!

This is God's attitude.

Luke 15:4-7

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? **5** And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders **6** and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' **7** I tell  you that in the same way there will be **more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Psalms 147:11

 **the Lord delights** in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Often, when we've wandered away from God, we are reluctant to return because we fear his wrath. But God has not appointed his children to suffer wrath. (1 Thessalonians 5:9) Instead, he wants to restore us and renew us. And, he rejoices in that opportunity! So, get on that Road to Renewal!

-  **1. Realization**
- 2. Resolution**
- 3. Repentance**
- 4. Return**
- 5. Reconciliation**
- 6. Restoration**
- 7. Rejoicing**