

“Riches to Rags to Riches!”

1. Intro:

- 1.1. **The Greatest Story ever told!**
 - 1.1.1. Some call it, *The Prodigal Son?* - Maybe better titled *The Parable of the Gracious Father* - That's the true focus.
 - 1.1.2. It's an emotional study.
- 1.2. The Pharisees are *“still trying to get it!”*
 - 1.2.1. Jesus is answering the indictment of eating with sinners(2).
 - 1.2.2. “When I eat with sinners **it's like** going after lost sheep; **it's like** finding a costly lost coin; **it's like** experiencing a prodigal returning.”
- 1.3. **Q:** See who do you best relate with in this story?

2. RICHES TO RAGS TO RICHES! (11-32)

- 2.1. **DIRTY LIL SINNERS!** (11-20a)
- 2.2. **The portion of goods** - The older son would get 2/3^{rds}, the younger 1/3rd.
- 2.3. **Pods – carob pods** when ripe these pods are filled with a dark honey like syrup.
 - 2.3.1. They were then collected, ground up, and fed to animals.
 - 2.3.2. They were also eaten by the very poor.
- 2.4. **So what did he do wrong?** – How about **disregarding his responsibilities** as a son toward his Father. - Misusing his **God-given freedom** to seek freedom **from** a responsible relationship to God.¹
- 2.5. It feels Free...for a time!
 - 2.5.1. How many a college students have moved away to a distant land, away from **mom & dad**, away from **accountability**, away from **watchful eyes**, enjoying there new felt freedoms; that often landed them right on their faces. [doesn't mean don't ever move out...just a motive check!]
 - 2.5.2. **It is like sky diving, wind in your face, living fast,...with no shoot!**
 - 2.5.3. They felt **restrained** by home, & **attracted** by the world.
 - 2.5.4. The **beginning** of all **sin** is when we no longer enjoy God's presence, love, & ways.
 - 2.5.4.1. We become **restless** when we can't find **satisfaction** in God.
- 2.6. (13) **Prodigal** – wasteful. No thought of responsibilities.
 - 2.6.1. **So, sin always wastes; living for self is waste.**
- 2.7. (14) **Fortune** goes & **Famine** comes.
 - 2.7.1. **Life within & circumstances without** often agree!

¹ Shepherd's notes; pg.57

- 2.8. (15) If you don't **attach** to **God**, you can be sure you'll **attach** to **someone**/something
- 2.8.1. It may be drugs, alcohol, money, illicit sex, an employer, a spouse, a sport, hobby, TV show, computer, could be something crude or a refined thing. [Whatever it is it is **swine food** in the end!]
- 2.8.2. Ok, you're **free**; you are your **own lord**.
- 2.9. **Why some prodigals don't come home!** – What will my **friends** say? What will **my dad, mom, brothers, sisters** say? What will my **church** friends say?
- 2.9.1. **Come home!** - From sin, from a broken relationship, from the sting of this world! **Come Home!**
- 2.10. **He came to himself** – like awaking from a dream, he came to grip with reality.
- 2.10.1. He finally saw himself as he really was & remember his father's home
- 2.10.2. At this point no hope of restored **son-ship**, but hopes for a **servant position**.
- 2.10.3. It was **not the badness of his life** that brought him to his senses, but **the goodness of his father!** [Oh yah!]
- 2.10.4. Rom.2:4 “**Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?**”
- 2.11. **Note his progression** – He thinks; remembers; owns it; decides/determines; turns around; & repents.
- 2.12. **THE PARDONING FATHER!** (20b-24)
- 2.13. **The suffering heart of God!**
- 2.14. **Releasing!**(12) sometimes you have to let them go & let them find out the hard way!
- 2.14.1. **Let them learn for themselves how good Father's home is.**
- 2.14.2. This is the parent toughest decision.
- 2.15. **Saw him a long way off!** – watching continually, recognizes quickly.
- 2.16. **Compassion!** – **When a son is lost, who suffers most?** (Fathers/mothers can answer that 1)
- 2.16.1. Oh the suffering heart of God. (we'll never understand) ☹️
- 2.16.2. **Humanity is suffering because it is away from God.**
- 2.17. **Running!** – an apparent sacrifice of dignity! No hesitation. Quick reconciliation.
- 2.18. **The father rushed to welcome his son & wouldn't even let him finish his well rehearsed confession.** (How many times did he rehearse it?)
- 2.18.1. “Um Lord”, “Yes you are forgiven!” {**this helps me with the women caught in adultery, & the thief on the cross**}
- 2.19. **Slow** are the steps of **repentance**, but **swift** are the feet of **forgiveness**.
- 2.19.1. **God can run** where we can barely **limp**.
- 2.19.2. **But, if we are limping** toward Him, He **will run** toward us! 😊
- 2.19.3. “**The Father may be out of breath, but never out of love!**” (Spurgeon)
- 2.19.4. **Could I forgive so quickly?** No hesitation, w/o rebuke, not waiting to see if they'll really stick around.

- 2.20. **Kissing!** – smothered him with kisses.
- 2.20.1. **But wait...he's not clean!** (That's what the Pharisees were saying about this unwashed crowd! Vs.2)
- 2.20.2. **Can't you wait till he's washed? - Until those rags are removed? Until he's decently clothed?**
- 2.20.3. **Shouldn't you wait and see** how he does?
- 2.20.4. **Shouldn't he be put on probation & see if he does well?**
- 2.20.5. **No way!!!** – Let me get my arms around him! - Let me pillow his head in my chest.
- 2.20.5.1. The village could have stoned him to death for the disgrace upon his family & village. (Deut.21:18-21)
- 2.20.5.2. **But if they threw any stones they would have hit the father!**
- 2.21. **Best Robe!** – Wait! Isn't this the #1 sons? (Isn't everything?)
- 2.22. **Ring!** – Full welcome. Indicate proof of son-ship.
- 2.23. **Sandals!** – Entire restoration. Again indicate son-ship was restored, not a servant.
- 2.24. **Fatted Calf!** – Veal!
- 2.25. **Eat & be merry!** – I'm sure the prodigal was happy to be home...but never to be compared to **the joy the Father has** of him coming home.
- 2.25.1. **An unending party? – they began to be merry...**(24)
- 2.26. **CLEAN SINNERS!** (24-30)
- 2.27. You may think the elder son has a pretty good beef! [Speaking of beef, that's mine isn't it?]
- 2.27.1. Then you've missed it completely!
- 2.28. **One younger son was an open sinner; the older brother a hidden one. One an unrighteous son; the older a self-righteous son. One extremely wicked; the other extremely moral!**
- 2.29. Don't miss it...the elder brother **IS** the Pharisee!
- 2.29.1. **This is for those who come to church week after week & think the Scriptures are for everyone else!**
- 2.30. This son was devoted to his fathers **law**, & his fathers **service**, but entirely out of sympathy with his fathers **heart!!!**
- 2.30.1. **Listen to him speak directly to the Pharisees & Scribes, with such compassion.** (This comes **before** the *Woe unto you's*)
- 2.30.2. They were so devoted to the **law & service** of God but completely missed His **heart!** *"If you had the heart of My Father, you couldn't look with contempt upon these men outside, with who I'm mixing."*
- 2.30.3. He should have imitated his father's heart toward the returning prodigal; instead **he turned into one...hard, cold, & unforgiving!**
- 2.31. **Wouldn't go in** – Pouting on the porch!
- 2.31.1. Was really an issue with **dad!** (not brother)

- 2.31.2. A problem with dad's forgiveness, resentful towards **mercy**, angry towards **grace**...thus he wouldn't go in.
- 2.31.3. "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." (Mt.23:13)
- 2.31.4. They wouldn't understand the death bed conversion of the thief on the cross; **nor** the forgiveness shown the woman caught in the very act of adultery.
- 2.31.5. **Q:** When you see sin, do you react with **discuss & not compassion?**
- 2.32. **So what's this sons issues?**
- 2.33. [1] His relationship with his father was as if it was **Master-Slave!** (29a)
- 2.33.1. (NIV) "Look! All these years I've been **slaving** for you."
- 2.33.2. **Exposed:** It had been years of **grim duty not of loving service!**
- 2.33.3. I'm looking for a **son** not a **slave!**
- 2.33.4. Acts 17:24,25 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is **not served** by human hands, **as if he needed anything**, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else."
- 2.34. [2] His relationship was that of a **Commander-Subordinate!** (29b)
- 2.34.1. **I never have transgressed your commandment at any time!**
- 2.34.2. Oh my...how about **NOW!** (not coming in house)
- 2.34.3. I'm looking for a **son** not a **subordinate!**
- 2.35. **THE PARDONING FATHERS RESPONSE!** (28,31,32)
- 2.36. His response was so gracious & patient. **The patient heart of God!**
- 2.36.1. Again, he helps this son with just as much compassion & love.
- 2.37. [1] **His father came out** – He didn't get mad. He came out.
- 2.37.1. This father came **out of the party**...Jesus came **out of heaven!**
- 2.38. [2] **Pleaded with him** – Didn't command him to come in. He could have demanded the servant to drag him in there, instead he pleads.
- 2.38.1. Come in son & **rejoice with me**^(6,9)– but the Pharisees couldn't rejoice.
- 2.38.2. The imperfect indicates "*he kept on beseeching him*"! (LKGNT)
- 2.38.3. **See, Jesus came to save hypocrites!** ☺
- 2.38.4. He doesn't want to hear "*I'll come to church*", "*I'll keep clean*", "*I'll be good*", **that's not what He wants!** – He wants relationship with you.
- 2.39. [3] **Son** – not my **servant**, not my **slave**, he never joins him on his turf.
- 2.40. [4] **You are always with me** – we eat together, we live together.
- 2.40.1. But, you never gave me **a young goat!** **A goat?** (you're the heir!)
- 2.40.2. I don't want you father, I want a **goat feast** with my friends!
- 2.40.3. **He's a prodigal without the guts to leave!** (John Piper)

- 2.40.4. He isn't home. He doesn't love being w/his father.
- 2.40.5. **We old Christians are so vulnerable to this!**
- 2.41. **[5] All that I have is yours** – His is an **inheritance** to **sons**; **not wages** to **slaves**.
- 2.42. (32) **It was right** – the story is left *open-ended*...
- 2.42.1. The curtain fell w/o hearing the older son's response to his father's entreaty.
- 2.43. **End:**
- 2.44. You **don't** have a choice to sin or not to sin, **only** what category it will be in!
- 2.44.1. Outside of Christ, you either fit into the category of the **prodigal** or the **elder brother**.
- 2.44.1.1. **Prodigal** symbolizes **tax collectors & sinners**;
Elder brother symbolizes **Pharisees & Scribes**.
- 2.44.2. Either extremely **wicked** or your extremely **moral**!
- 2.44.2.1. There are sins against the **flesh** & some against the **spirit**.²
- 2.44.2.2. **One guilty of gross things**; the other guilty of a **critical & unloving spirit, pride, & an unwillingness to forgive**.
- 2.44.3. **Q: Are you the open sinner or the hidden one?** [I think I was both!!!]
- 2.44.4. **Q: Who do you best relate with in this story?**
- 2.44.5. **There is no case hopeless, no situation too dire!**
- 2.44.6. **Come out of the pig sty, or Come off the porch...but Come!**
- 2.44.6.1. **Come prodigal sons, prodigal daughters; prodigal husbands, prodigal wives; prodigal grandmothers, prodigal grandfathers Come!**
- 2.45. **Illustration: Once Lincoln** was asked how he was going to treat the rebellious southerners when they had finally been defeated & had returned to the Union of the **United States**. The questioner expected that Lincoln would take a dire vengeance, but he answered, **"I will treat them as if they had never been away."**

² 2 Cor.7:1