

A father and two sons - Rev. David Parker

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Rev. David Parker

[0:00] His bond is firm and sure, free mood it cannot be.! Your soul is strong and you are God!
From all eternity!

! The seas, O Lord, have lifted up, They lifted up their voice, but seas have lifted up their ways and made a mighty noise.

The Lord enthroned on highest trump, more powerful is He, and thunder of the oceans, and the Lord's grace, our breakers of the sea.

Your royal statutes, Lord, stand firm, unchanging is Your word, and holiness at all.

For endless days, O Lord. O Lord, as I'm big ye, as, O Lord, as I'm big ye, as, O Lord, as I'm big ye,
as, O Lord, as I'm big ye, as, I pray on nations all May all thy saving grace Let me love praise thee,
Lord

[2 : 39] And give a holy grace O let the nations be glad In songs their voices ring The just, the people just On earth will nations all Let me love praise thee, Lord Let them praise thee, O great and small

The earth her future shall yield Our God shall praise thee, O God God shall those words and shall
And hear thee, O God Amen Amen

And sound in blue And chains of high on health They stormed the waves of God's high, against His words rebelled.

And so He made them with a heart, in bitterness and shame.

They stumbled and they could not rise, stood out that no one came.

[5:59] Then to the Lord they cried for help, He saved them from their doom.

He broke away their cruel chains, and brought them out of doom.

So let them thank Him for His love, and His mercy and peace.

Because He breaks the gates of cross, and Thy own hearts be pleased.

Blessed is the one who truly moves for help to take us God.

[7:39] Blessed is the one who places all his hope upon the Lord.

He who made the earth and heaven, and the seas with all their storm.

He who keeps His every promise, who is faithful evermore.

He delivers from oppression, and relieves the hungry's might.

He releases those in prison, to the blind the Lord gives sight.

[8 : 41] Those who are bowed down, He raises. God delights in righteousness.

He protects and cares for strangers, widows and the fatherless.

He frustrates the wicked's purpose. So the Lord through endless days.

Praise to every generation. Praise your God, O Zion.

Praise. may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may may may O God, they said to me, Jerusalem, and within my years, my reach outstoun in me.

To Israel's mercy on me there, true may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may
may may

Peace and felicity.

[19:05] Without our aid He did us live.

We are His flock, He doth us fear. And for His sheep He doth us fear.
Who enter then His gates with praise.
A brook with joy His course under. Praise, Lord, a blessed name.
Praise, Lord, a blessed name.
[20 : 33] Praise, Lord, a blessed name.

Let's unite our hearts in prayer. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this great privilege that is ours of being able to come before you, to worship you, to give you praise and thanksgiving, to extol you and to adore you because of who you.

Because of who you are. We do not need any other reason for our worship or our praise except that as the hymn that the psalm has said here, that for the Lord God is good.

And how we rejoice this morning that this is what you have revealed and disclosed about your being.

Lord, this great infinite, this great infinite, eternal, and majestic being. This being that is a majestic being. This being that is a consuming fire.

[22 : 10] This being that no one can fathom your mystery and your infinity. And yet, Lord, you have come to us in the person of Jesus Christ and become one of us and lived among us, made flesh and dwelt among us because of your desire to call us back to yourself, to bring the wanderers home, to even look for that one lost sheep.

And Lord, we thank you for all of this. We pray, O God, that you would cleanse us from all our sins. We know that our feet, as it were, get dirty as we go through our weekly routine.

We sin in thought and word and deed. We sin by failing to do things that we should have done and by doing things that we should not have done.

And we bring our sins before you, Lord. And we remember the phrase of David in one of his psalms, my sins are very great. And of course, Lord, we perhaps do not, we cannot endure their gravity, but we know how grave they are because it's our sins that nailed Jesus Christ to the tree.

So, Father, we pray that you will accept our praise, that you will forgive our sins, and that your Spirit might be with us today, speaking to each one of us in the depths of our being.

[24 : 11] Hear us, Lord, and answer above all that we can ask or expect or deserve, because we ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

Now, it is very good to see the children here, and I want to just have a word with you.

Children of the different ages, and seen in maybe one or two different bits of the congregation here. Back home, I would normally have the children to come to the front, and I would come down, but I'm just going to do it from here, certainly at present.

I want to share a verse with you. I'm just feeling my pockets here. No, it's not here. And I'm feeling them for my mobile phone.

And maybe some of you older children have a mobile phone, or maybe you're younger and you're thinking, I hope it's not too long before I get one, and you'll be doing what everybody does.

[25 : 31] What I do, you'll be sending messages and receiving messages. And I just want to say to you that the Bible is like a book of messages.

Thousands of them. Tens of thousands of them. And the messages are from God.

And the messages is God telling us about Himself. And He's also telling us about how we can have the best life possible.

And He's also telling us that things are not always okay with us. And I want to read this little message among the tens of thousands that God has sent to us in the Bible here.

And it's in the first part of the Bible we call the Old Testament. And it's in a book called Isaiah. And it's chapter 54 and it's verse 6.

[26 : 44] Sorry, chapter 53, verse 6. All we like sheep have gone astray. All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to His own way. And the Lord has laid on Him, that's Jesus, the guilt and wrongdoing, I'm just paraphrasing this, of us all.

So that's one of the messages that we find from God's message book, if you like. I'll read it again.

All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to His own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the wrongdoing and guilt of every one of us.

That is on Jesus. Well, I've been driving about a little since I came to Lewis. And I was born and brought up in a town called Clydebank, which is about maybe four miles from the centre of Glasgow.

[28:01] And where I was brought up, I never saw any sheep. But when I'm in Lewis here, I'm seeing sheep all the time. And yesterday or the day before, I can't remember now, there was sheep and they were sitting very, very close, lying down very close to the edge of the road.

And there was no fence or wall protecting them. And I thought, how dangerous is that? Do they not know that a car could hit them or run over them?

And this is what God is saying. He's saying, you know, sometimes we go astray, we wander, and we bring ourselves into situations that's very dangerous for us.

And we do it because we want to do it. It says here that everyone has turned to his own way.

Now, when I was a child growing up, now, I want you to listen to this because maybe your experience is different. When I was a child growing up, I don't remember saying, I've got, by the way, I've got three brothers and a sister.

[29:18] I don't remember saying to them, tell me what you would like and I'll try and do it for you. I don't remember saying, here, this is mine, but I want you to share.

I want you to have it for a whole week. I remember just saying, I don't want to share.

And this is what the message of God is telling us here, that something within us wants to do our own thing. And why that is dangerous is it takes us away from God.

And what God is asking us to do is not to do our own thing, but come to God and follow his lovely direction.

Because his direction leads us to the best life possible. I hope you can remember that. Thank you for listening. Good evening. We're going to sing again.

[30:27] We're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 40, in verse 1 to 5.

Psalm 40, verses 1 to 5. And again, that's from the traditional psalter. Let's be upstanding for this praise.

I waited for the Lord my God.

may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may may
may He brought me from a fearful pit, and from the miry clay, and on a road he set my feet.

He established in my way, he put a new song in my mouth, our God to magnify.

[32:35] Many shall see it, and shall fear, and on the Lord rely.

O blessed is the man whose trust upon the Lord relies.

Respect him not, the proud nor such, a stern, a sigh to lie.

O Lord my God, though many are the wonders of us done, Thy gracious love to us for far, above all thoughts are gone.

In order not, not wreck on them.

[34:22] To thee in them declare, and speak of them.

I woo them o'er, and have me numbered are.

We're going to read then from Paul's letter to the Romans in chapter 5, and we'll be reading verses 5 to 11.

Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 5, verses 5 to 11. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

[35 : 53] But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life.

More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

and then if we can read from Luke's Gospel in chapter 15. Luke's Gospel chapter 15, and we'll read from the beginning.

Well, we'll read from verse 11 to verse 32. The parable of the prodigal son.

[37 : 24] And Jesus said there was a man who had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.

And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into the fields to feed pigs.

And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger?

I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

[38 : 44] Treat me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

And the son said to the father, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him.

And put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it. And let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, Your brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.

[40 : 03] But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. But he answered his father, Look, these many years I have served you and I never disobeyed your command.

Yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him. And he said to him, Father, that is, Son, you are always with me and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad for this your brother was dead and is alive, was lost, and is found.

May the Lord add his own blessing to the public reading of his word. Now, I'm going to pray again and I see that I forgot to do the bit about the communal prayer.

[41 : 10] So what I'm going to do is I will come to that point and when I come to that point in my prayer, all of us can say the Lord's Prayer together.

Let's unite our hearts again in prayer. All flesh shall come to you because you are the one that hears prayer.

And Lord, we do indeed come to you for a needy world, a world where there are wars and rumours of wars, a world where we shame our species, as it were, as we slaughter one another.

And this is something, of course, that has been happening throughout all of our history because of greed, because of the desire for power, because of the desire to control other people, because of all sorts of desires, some perhaps legitimate, like security.

But, Heavenly Father, we have shown how far we can descend in all of these instances and the current ones as well as the past ones of war.

[42 : 33] And how, like a moth or a fly, we can slaughter our fellow human beings made in the image of God.

And so, Lord, we just come before you not really knowing how to pray, Lord, and knowing that your sovereignty is shrouded in mystery.

But pray we must, Lord, and we continue to pray, and we pray, Lord, that you would reign in the hearts of men and women and, of course, in the hearts of leaders of governments and nations.

We read in the Old Testament, Lord, that you do this. You did it with Persian kings. And, Father, we pray that you would do it again so that there might be a cessation of all the killing and all the slaughter of children, of men and women.

Heavenly Father, we pray that you would speak to our own leaders in Edinburgh and in Westminster and that you would enable them to have the right motive for governing the well-being of the people and that you would touch their hearts and cause them to introduce laws and policies that are glorifying to you.

[44 : 19] We also pray, Lord, for our Christian brethren scattered throughout the world who experience things that we cannot even imagine in terms of losses, of freedom, of opportunity, in terms of active and direct persecution.

and we just lift them up before you, Lord, and thank you for them and pray that your grace will indeed prove sufficient in all that they have to go through.

And for us here, Lord, we pray that you will help us to be salt and light in our communities and that you will enable us to share our faith, not just with words, but with actions.

And we pray that we will be followers of Jesus going about, doing good, healing the sick, giving people bread for their material needs and bringing the hope of the gospel to them.

Did you not say, Lord Jesus, that the servant is not above his master? If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you, which presupposes that we are out there, Lord, presenting the gospel.

[45 : 51] Help us to do it, Lord, for your glory. And remember, Lord, those among the congregation here who are going through a difficult time, not just the ordinary difficulties of being, living our Christian life day by day and all that that entails, but perhaps some other difficult situation, whether it be relational or within the family or whether it be health or whether it be concern and sorrow and grief, whatever it might be, Lord, we pray that you will help us to draw near to you because you, Lord, are our anchor, you are our rock and you are our comforter.

Help us, Lord, to come before you and to lay out all that we are going through in your presence.

Father, pardon then our sins and help us now, Lord, as together we recite this great prayer that you have bequeathed to us.

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. Well, before we turn to the sermon, we're going to sing again, this time in Psalm 103 from Sing Psalms.

[47 : 58] Psalm 103 from Sing Psalms. It will be verses 8 to 18.

The Lord is merciful and kind, to anger slow and full of grace. He will not constantly reprove or in his anger hide his face.

Let's be upstanding for this praise. The Lord is merciful and kind, to anger slow and full of grace.

He will not constantly reprove or in his anger hide his face.

He does not punish our mistakes or give our sins their just reward.

[49 : 04] and pray his love as high as heaven towards all those who fear the Lord.

towards all those who fear the Lord. As far as he sits from the west, so far his love has borne away, our many sins and trespasses, and all the guilt that on us lay.

Just as our Father loves his child, so God loves those who fear his name.

For he remembers we are dust, and well he knows our feeble frame.

And well he knows our feeble frame. Each human life is like the grass, and like a meadow far it grows.

[50 : 32] His place will never be recalled. Once over if the tempest blows.

But everlasting is God's love For those who fear him and their sin, For those who keep his covenant, And carefully his resetting, And carefully his resetting.
So if you can turn with me back to Luke's Gospel, Chapter 15.
This is a very well known story, the parable of the prodigal son, And I'm sure people have seen things that I will never see in it.
And it's not, it may not be the case that I bring anything new, That would be quite surprising. But I think it's such a wonderful parable, A wonderful story, And so critical to the heart of the Gospel, That it is easily worth repetition.

[52 : 13] Does God really have joy When lost sinners return to his fold?

Will God forgive the most profligate sinner in the Isle of Lewis?

Will God receive the backslider who has radically dishonored God by his or her profligacy?

Is the hymn writer correct to say, I quote, The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives?

Will we here in Barvis Free Church Welcome the smelly, starving, and sin-ridden repentant soul With open arms into our midst?

[53 : 25] Right at the very beginning of this chapter, Chapter 15, verses 1 to 3, Is a strong clue how to understand and interpret this parable.

So, I'm going to begin by reading these first three verses of chapter 15, Then we'll move on to the parable itself. Now, when tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus, And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man received sinners and eats with them. And note these words in verse 3. So, Jesus told them this parable. So, he tells them this parable about the man having a hundred sheep, And he goes on to tell them a second parable in verse 8, Or, what woman?

And then he goes on to tell them the parable that we'll be looking at this morning, And he said there was a man. So, every one of these parables are Jesus' answer to the criticism of these great religious leaders, And there were six people who were critiquing Jesus, Because he was allowing sinners and tax collectors to come to hear him.

Six groups were regarded as sinners, Well, more than six groups, But six of the groups that were regarded as sinners to avoid like the plague, Were tax collectors, Prostitutes, Samaritans, Lepers, Ritually unclean, The uneducated masses.

[55 : 21] Those people that had practiced the law, And sought to keep the law, They had come to this incredible situation, That they felt they should not have any contact at all, Except with people who kept the law.

Now, the common theme underlying the three parables is, God has great joy when a single lost sinner returns home in repentance to God.

We'll focus, as I say, exclusively on this third parable. And while the third parable reaches its climax in the account of the younger brother's return, And it reaches an anticlimax at the elder son's attitude, The greater truth that shines with brilliance, in my view, Is the picture given of God, Especially in this third parable.

Let's look then at this incredible parable, Given as an answer to the criticism of the Pharisees. Let's look at what Jesus has got to say to them.

And we're just going to look at the characters, We're going to keep it simple, So we'll begin with the younger son. He makes a strike, does he not?

[56 : 55] For independence. He makes a strike for independence. Where are we now?

I've just lost my bearings yet. And the younger son there is there, Verse 11 and 12. The younger son said to his father, Give me the share of property that is coming to me.

And the father divides the property, And not many days later, The younger son gathered all he had, And took a journey into a far country.

Now you can tell just by reading there, That this is a strike for independence. This is a strike to get out of what he perhaps felt Were the constraints of home life.

The constraints of the kind of ideas and values of that home life. Because it says not many days after he got that share of his inheritance from his dad, That he gathered everything together.

[58 : 10] It looks like to me that this is something that was very, very much meditating on his mind. It was in his mind. And he makes his strike for freedom.

To plunge into what he thought was escape and freedom from the restraints of his home life, Into what he imagined would be a better way.

In other words, he wanted independence from God. Now, note what I've said there. That indicates to you that I'm seeing the father in this parable as a picture of God.

He wanted independence from God rather than depending on God in faith. Now, is that not the story of every one of us?

Is that not the story of humanity? Is that not the story of original sin? The sin in the garden? The whisper of the tempter that is keeping you back from something.

[59 : 27] There's something that is gloriously better that he's not telling you about. And this is what's going on in this younger son.

He wants to throw off the constraints. And he wants to go to Rome, perhaps, or Alexandria, and be under the influence of the Roman and Greek world's values and idols.

And you can see that having imbibed the ideas, he gives free reign to his amoral life and tries every kind of pleasure in order to find satisfaction.

You can see that there, and when he had spent everything. It's a bit like saying, he tried this, he tried that, he tried something else.

And is that not a bit like what it is if we're not getting our ultimate joy and our ultimate acceptance and value from God and satisfaction?

[60 : 46] Is that not what we do? We try this, that, and some other thing and find out if we can get our satisfaction from any of these things. This is what he, this is what he was doing.

And yet it tells us, when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country and he began to be in need. And I think that, you know, although that's a natural famine that is being stated as part of the story, I think that Jesus is also indicating there that there is a spiritual famine in this young man.

That there is something there that is growing and it tells us that he began to be in need. So what I've been saying so far is, this is a strike for independence from God.

And it's a move to be under the influence of a completely different culture. And what about you and I?

Are we making a strike to get away from God? Is that growing in our thoughts and in our mind?

[62 : 07] Are we unduly influenced by the ideas in our lifestyle, in our lives, by the ideas and the influences or the so-called influencers of our day and age?

It's difficult not to be because that is a constant drip, as it were, of stuff coming out of media and coming out of all the social platforms, people trying to, and even the TV, people trying to influence our thoughts all the time.

But notice, not only his strike for independence, not only his succumbing to these influences, but notice the inhumane nadir or lowest point of his fall from grace, reaching rock bottom with feeding pigs, what was anathema to Jewish people.

In verses 15 and 16 there. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his field to feed pigs.

And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. And you know, in a sense, it's a commentary and a picture that if we try the broken cisterns of this world, if we try to go and get our thirst quenched and get our hunger met by all the things that this world is able to offer us, it will end up a dead end and offer us nothing but despair and dejection.

[64 : 18] So, from his strike for independence from God, placing himself in the far country of godly ideas and influences, to his lowest point in the gutter of feeding pigs and longing to have pig food because of his starving stay, can there be a more disreputable and degraded sinner?

Now, remember who's listening and following and every word that Jesus has been saying so far in this first part of the parable. The Pharisees that are criticizing him.

And yet, he's not finished the younger son. In verse 17, But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants has more than enough bread?

And here am I, I perish with hunger. There was a voice, was there not, calling from the depths, reminding him of who he was, reminding him of where he had fallen from, distant memories beginning to surface in his mind, as he recalls the blessings of the hired servants, contrasted with his desperate situation.

And so, he resolves to return in repentance to his father. Here indeed was a sinner, a big one, a grade A sinner.

[66:07] How would the father react to this sinner, who perhaps was partly driven to return out of his desperate need for food? But I perish with hunger, he says.

And this brings me to my second point. God's response to returning sinners. And I want you to remember, as we explore this second point, God's response to returning sinners.

I want you to remember, I think I said this before, that Jesus is not only our Redeemer, our Savior, our Liberator, but he's the Revealer.

However, he reveals God. Everything that he ever said, everything that he ever did, his attitude, his outlook, his ministry, from the beginning to the cross, to the resurrection, all of that is a revelation of God.

And, of course, these Pharisees and Sadducees that are critiquing Jesus for allowing sinners to come near him, they're, they're, they're, as far as they're concerned, this is outrageous to God.

[67:33] Well, says Jesus, let me just show you God's response to the one of the worst grade A sinners that I've just profiled in the younger son.

Verse 20, And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him.

I don't know if there's anybody here who's a long way off from God spiritually.

Perhaps you've had that experience and thankfully you've overcome and you've gone back, or you've come back, I should say.

But isn't this wonderful? Isn't this a beautiful picture? That while he was yet so far off, a long way off, his father saw him.

[68:52] Now, remember what I'm saying. This is Jesus telling us what God is like. This is Jesus telling us what God's response and reaction is to a degraded sinner like the one depicted by the younger son and by implication any lost sinner.

He's looking out for us coming home. He's not indifferent to our lostness.

He's not, as it were, dwelling in his great majesty and eternal relational love between the beings of the one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

He's not resting, as it were, on that and has no concern. I have no pleasure in the sinner that dies. It is my pleasure, it is my desire that people come to a knowledge of salvation and truth.

There he is. Looking, waiting, hoping for the sinner to come. And notice what it says next.

[70:14] And felt compassion. Now, okay, this is an English translation, but it's right to put felt compassion.

I said to you, I think, recently, that this compassion is a very powerful, intense, emotional word. Gut-wrenching.

And it's said the same of Jesus. Jesus had compassion. Jesus felt compassion. Now, it's incredible.

We were thinking, I think, last Sunday, when Jesus, it says, saw the people, he felt compassion.

And I was asking last week, what do we see when we see people that are not believers? Well, here's the Father. He felt compassion as he saw his Son returning.

And ran, quite incredible, ran. God is more willing to pardon our sin.

[71:28] God is more willing to forgive us. God is more willing to bestow on us all that he has to offer of his everlasting love than we are to petition for it.

He ran. Somebody said he must have had to lift up his normal clothing garments. I know this is a story, but this is what's in the story.

God is more willing to do and, listen to this, and embraced him and kissed him. Do you think that God takes us back as we come to him for salvation or from a backslidden situation, from a wandering situation, do you think he takes us back with no affection, with no, just a kind of cold sort of tick of the box, He embraced him and kissed him.

He embraced him and kissed him. And the younger son was going to say, I'm not worthy to be a son, just make me a hired servant.

And when the younger son goes to the father, returns to the father, he starts to say, I have sinned against heaven and before you and I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.

[73:21] And he doesn't get to the point of saying, just make me a hired servant because the father interrupts. Verse 22.

But the father said to his servants, bring quickly the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.

What is that suggesting about God? It's suggesting about God unconditional acceptance. It's suggesting about God total and full restoration.

not little niggly bits held back or cynicism or suspicion. Embraced him and kissed him and restored him to full sonship.

Is this not more than a parable? It is more than a parable anyway because what Jesus has done in this third parable of chapter 15, the parable so-called of the prodigal son, what Jesus has done here is lifted a realistic story from human and social relations.

[74:55] It's a revelation of God's joy, is it not? When one repentant sinner returns home to eternal acceptance and the joy of heaven.

It is the removing of the veil of God and an insight into his heart.

It is a revelation of God's joy and a revelation of God's concern for each individual. That's what Jesus was telling them in these other parables.

Look, you know yourself in human relations that if you've got a flock of a hundred sheep and one of them is lost, what do you do? You go after the lost one. The celebration begins, verse 23 and 24.

And bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate, for this my son was dead and now he is alive. Jesus is really saying much the same to the Pharisees in answer to the criticism of him allowing sinners and tax collectors and so on.

[76:29] I mean, Jesus actually said, didn't he at one point, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven Okay.

We've looked at the younger son. We've looked at the father's response to his homecoming. What about the elder son? And who is Jesus?

The eye of Jesus, who does he have in mind in this story of the elder son? It's obvious, isn't it? It's the Pharisees.

And in a sense, it's Israel. And in a sense, it's Israel. I want you to notice, by the way, that both brothers are described as sons.

That both brothers are described as sons. Well, the first thing we notice is, the elder son is outside.

[77:46] outside. Now, his older son was in the field. So we first meet him outside the celebration of the grey-day sinner's return.

And these Pharisees and religious people, and by implication, any of us who think that our own righteousness is the root to God, and perhaps thinking that we are well inside, if we have never come in repentance and acknowledging our guilt and sin before God, far from being inside, we are on the outside like the Pharisees.

But they shouldn't have been on the outside. As Paul says, I think it's in Romans, it might not be, but as Paul says, to Israel were given the covenants and the promises, and so on.

And Israel, of course, is called his son. Many times. There he is.

He's outside. But as he comes near the house, he hears this music and dancing, this celebration.

And he called one of the servants and said, what's going on?

[79:35] And the hired servant said, your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound. Sounds a bit like that the hired servant there was more on the right planet than the elder brother.

But, verse 28, he became angry. But, verse 28, he became angry. He became angry and said to his father, he refused to go in, and his father came out and then treated him.

Notice the relational thing here, the father and the son. And the father comes out and then treats him. In the ministry of Jesus, we're very aware of the clashes that he had with the Pharisees.

But he did go to certain houses of Pharisees. There were Pharisees that did follow him. And Jesus wanted the Pharisees to recognize that he was the promised Messiah and that they would rejoice.

As John puts it in chapter 1, he came to his own and his own received him not. And here is a picture again of God through Jesus Christ.

[81:05] Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, it said Jesus, how often I would have gathered you, but you would not. I wonder if there's someone in here to whom God is saying something like that.

In verses 29 and 30, he answered his father, the elder brother, look, these many years I have served you, I have never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.

And listen to the contemptuous tone of this. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. And he said to him, listen to the words of the father to the elder son.

He said to him, son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

[82 : 48] And I believe that these words certainly apply to Israel at the Israel of Jesus' day, who constituted in Jesus' day, who constituted in Jesus' day, the people of God.

That is no longer the case. The people of God are Jew and Gentile and the body of Christ. But here, they were son.

Israel was son. But they would not. And here, Jesus is using his compassion even to seek to signal to the Pharisees that you have no need for your attitude towards sinners.

Again, that attitude that Jesus is so well aware of, because he heard it often enough from them in their criticism to him, is given a wonderful picture in the parable of the temple, or the statement about the two people praying in the temple, where one is standing saying, I'm glad I'm not like this person, and I do this, I do that, and everything else, and the other one beating their breast, and not so much as lifting their eyes to heaven and saying, God be merciful to me.

And Jesus saying, who do you think, who do you think received that reconciliation, that forgiveness, that salvation? Not those of a self-righteous mode, but those of a humble mode, who recognized their need for Jesus Christ.

[84 : 58] I hope that we do, each one, this morning. Who can you identify with of these two brothers?

the younger, the younger, or the elder? Are you still lost, or have you been found?

Amen. Amen. May the Lord bless these thoughts to each one of our hearts, for his glory. glory.

Amen. We're going to conclude our service then, by singing in Psalm 130, from the Sing Praise Psalms.

Psalm 130, singing the whole psalm. Lord, from the depths I call to you. Lord, hear me from on high, and give attention to my voice, when I for mercy cry.

Let's sing this to God's praise. Lord, from the depths I call to you.

[86 : 28] Lord, hear me from on high, Lord, hear me from on high, I'll give attention to my voice, when I for mercy cry.

Lord, in your presence, the circumstances, if you are sick, if you are sick, but yet forgiveness is with you, that we may fear you, Lord.

I wait, my soul waits for the Lord, my hope is in his word.

Lord, that the watchman waits for dawn, my soul waits for the Lord.

O Israel, good, pure hope in God, for mercy is within, and for redemption promises, this people he'll redeem.

[88 : 55] Let's receive God's blessing. May the love of God our Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen.