

CONVERSATIONS OF A YOUNG MAN

Text: Luke 15:11-24

INTRO: The parable commonly known as "the prodigal son" has been viewed from many different angles. In its original setting & context, along with 2 other parables, its major thrust is to underscore the happiness of God when those who have misbehaved are restored to His grace & fellowship, & conversely, how those who are right with God should all share in that happiness.

But the parable of the prodigal son is so true to life, it is frequently used to illustrate other lessons as well. In this sermon, I want you to think with me, using this parable, as we reflect on the conversations of a young man.

- I. FIRST, HE SPEAKS "FOR" HIMSELF. And basically, what he says is "Gimme," vs. 11-13.
 - A. Like many young men & women he had a sense of adventure. He longed to experience life in the far country.
Uncle Horace.
 - B. Like many young folks, he saw a need to "find himself."
 1. He took no note of the grief he would bring his father
 2. He was unconcerned about the extra work load that would fall upon the shoulder of his older brother
 3. In the terminology of today, he was looking out for # one. And he was neither the first or last to do so
 - a. Lot did so, Gen 13:5-12.
 - b. The multitude of JN 6:30-34 did so.
 - c. The 5 foolish virgins did so, MT 25:8
 - C. If experience offers a lesson to the human race about anything, it teaches us that when we seek only our own selfish interests, we are not really working in our best interest at all--a lesson that, unfortunately, many folks in each generation insist on learning the hard way.

D. Very few things in life come with a guarantee--but I can just about guarantee you that if you choose the path of rebellion & wastefulness you will come upon hard times.

II. THE 2ND CONVERSATION OF THE YOUNG MAN, HE IS TALKING TO HIMSELF, vs. 14-19.

A. Sometimes we all need to do some soul-searching & some talking to ourselves.

B. Notice that the soul-searching which eventually led to the young man's recovery did not take place while he was having fun in a party atmosphere. Having chosen the path of waste & rebellion, he had to come upon hard times to really learn how to live.

Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting. For that is the end of all men; & the living will take it to heart. (Eccl 7:2).

C. DEAR ANN LANDERS: I read the letter from the hippie signed "Ashamed to go back." I was in her shoes--if she had shoes, that is. I didn't. When I split it was because home was a drag & my mind was really spaced from drugs. I thot San Francisco, Los Angeles & Mexico had a lot in store for me. Well, I was right. It had acid, pot, 13 people in a 3-room apartment & VD & thrift stores where you could buy someone's beat up jeans for \$1. I dug being "free." I thot loving & sharing was beautiful--until I woke up one morning in a Phoenix hospital. The speed I had shared with 2 other freaks had strychnine in it. You would have thot I learned my lesson, but no, it happened again--an overdoes of LSD. After that experience I knew the next time I'd kill myself so I decided to go home. I didn't have a cent so I thumbed my way from the west coast to Ohio. When I got home I walked around the block 4 times before I could work up the courage to ring the bell. My mom almost keeled over when she saw me. She threw her arms around my neck & cried. Dad didn't say much but I know he felt the same way. He went into the other room to hide his tears. I hope every kid who reads this & is ashamed to go back will take my word for it. Home is the best place to be & your folks will be happy to see you. I still haven't found myself but I'm alive & looking--&

thankful for small favors. (signed) Back From Hell.

D. We all need to practice some soul-searching from time to time. The prodigal in Christ's parable needed to realize 2 things.

1. His sinful condition.
2. The benefits of his father's house.

III. THE NEXT TIME, WE HEAR THE YOUNG MAN, HE IS TALKING AGAINST HIMSELF, vs. 20-24.

A. He did not defend his wrongs or imply they were unimportant

1. Not "if" I have sinned... or
2. "Maybe I've been wrong..." or
3. "Some think I have sinned."

B. It wasn't until he focused attention on his failures that someone else began to speak "for" him, vs. 22-24, 32.

C. Compare & contrast the patriarch Job.

1. In contrast, the prodigal had been rebellious & wasteful. Job had been faithful.
2. But both came upon hard times.
3. Again in contrast, the prodigal knew what had caused his misery. He had chosen the path that virtually assured his failure. Job, on the other hand, was at a loss to explain his miserable physical condition. Job complained long & loud, & perhaps, quite understandably so.

4. But both had this in common. It was when they focused on the needs of others as well as themselves that their problems were solved.

And the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. (Job 42:10)

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