**Jesus Keep Me from Going Astray**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Luke 15:11-24**

**Sunday Morning**

**January 27, 2019**

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with loose living.

14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." '

**The condition of your heart determines the direction of your life**

Saints, this is a very important issue because there are really only two directions in life, and they go in opposite ways and lead to opposing destinies.

You can either walk toward the Lord Jesus Christ into eternal life or away from Him into eternal death. And the determining factor is the state of your spirit.

Saints, in the parable of the prodigal son, the character descriptions could represent each of us. We could be living a sinful lifestyle like the younger brother, be self-righteous and unforgiving like the older brother, or have a merciful heart like the father in the parable.

This story is the last of three consecutive parables that Jesus spoke to the Pharisees in response to their grumbling against Him for His mercy toward sinners.

**Luke 15:1-2**

1 Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

Each one dealt with something that was lost!

**A Lost Sheep**

**Luke 15:3-7**

3 So He spoke this parable to them, saying: 4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

**A Lost Coin**

**Luke 15:8-10**

8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' 10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

**A Lost Son**

**Luke 15:11-13**

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

Saints, since the Word of God is true, we can trust that the guidance and warnings He gives in this illustration of a lost son are accurate and should be heeded.

If we head down the path this younger son chose, we can be certain that we too will meet a similar outcome even though we can’t see it at the moment.

**Matthew 7:13-14**

13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

**The Downward Steps of the Prodigal Son**

**1. Desire**

Saints, this young man’s heart was filled with a desire for freedom. He had begun to view life in his father’s house as restrictive; therefore, he asked his father for his share of the estate.

Despite the fact that the inheritance was normally received after his death, this father complied with his son’s request and gave him his portion of the estate.

**2. Decision**

Shortly thereafter, the son decided to leave home to pursue his desires unhindered. One of Satan’s goals is to convince us that having our own way and leaving God’s restrictions behind is the beginning of real life.

**Proverbs 14:12**

“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”

**Proverbs 19:21**

“Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.”

**3. Departure**

Saints, the son went away to a far country. For our purposes, we can consider a far country as anywhere we choose to go outside of God’s will. It could be a block away or across the globe because it speaks of the condition of our heart, not the location of our bodies.

The devil stirs up discontent by pointing out what we are missing. Then he paints us a picture of the good life that awaits us if we’ll follow him. However, he always omits the end result of a life of sinful indulgence.

**John 10:10**

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

**Matthew 4:8-10**

8 Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

Saints, with plenty of money to fuel his desires, the young man sets off to enjoy the pleasures of sin. In a far country there would be no one to hold him accountable, so he could do whatever he pleased. But God sees everything and will one day hold each person accountable.

**Hebrews 9:27**

“It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment”

**4. Deception**

Saints, the Prodigal Son fell for the devil’s lies without considering the consequences that would inevitably follow. He squandered all the money “with loose living.” Life looked good for the moment.

**Luke 15:13**

“And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with loose living.”

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

**5. Wandering**

Saints, the problem with living for our own pleasures is that the novelty soon wears thin. The enjoyment we once experienced diminishes as we discover that sin’s satisfaction is temporary.

In an attempt to regain the pleasure, we may wander from one experience to the next, only to discover that there is no lasting pleasure in sin.

**James 4:17**

**“**So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”

**6. Wanting**

Saints, the young man soon found that not only was his satisfaction waning, but his funds were diminished. Following his desires had left him bankrupt and friendless.

To make matters worse, a famine came to the land causing a scarcity of food. Satan never reveals the outcome of following his temptations because his goal is to destroy and ruin people. His path to pleasure is littered with broken homes, lives, and the bodies of those who believed him.

Saints, this is why Jesus had to come!

**Luke 4:18**

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed”

Saints, in desperation, the Prodigal Son hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country and found himself in the lowest place a Jewish man could end up—in a hog pen feeding pigs.

He was so hungry even the pods he gave to the pigs started to look good to him. Sometimes it takes the direst of circumstances to open blinded eyes. No matter how many people may have warned him of the dangers of heading down this path, he couldn’t see the foolishness of his choices until he came to the end of the road. That’s when the young man came to his senses and thought,

**Luke 15:17**

But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

Saints, the path of pleasure, which eventually leads to desperation, has been taken by many people who’ve rejected the warnings given by family and friends.

And like the Prodigal Son, they find themselves in figurative pig pens today deprived of resources and dignity.

**How could something that looked so good in the beginning turn so bad?**

Saints, it’s always that way when God is left out of the picture, and people walk away from Him. However, no matter how far someone has gone from the Lord and how deep he or she has fallen, God never stops loving and seeking the lost.

**Luke 19:10**

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

**Ezekiel 34:16**

“I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."

**In Closing:**

**7. Make a Decision**

After coming to his senses, the Prodigal Son decided to go back to his father. Full of shame and guilt, he planned his confession and left for home.

This is the only solution for anyone who wants to come home to God. The feelings of shame, guilt, and conviction are the result of the Holy Spirit’s work as He draws each prodigal back to the heavenly Father.

**Acts 3:19**

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord…”

Saints, God is willing to forgive everyone who comes to Him in humble repentance, confessing their sin, relying on the blood of Christ for cleansing, receiving Him as Savior by faith, and surrendering themselves to Him as Lord.

Just as the Prodigal Son was welcomed home by his father, so God will welcome all who come to Him for salvation. There was no reluctance on the father’s part to embrace and clothe his young son and celebrate his homecoming.

And this is exactly how the Lord God welcomes all who come to Him, even those who have made a mess of their lives. There’s nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Amen!

**1. What is the condition of your heart today?**

**2. Are you drawing closer to God or running away from Him?**

**3. Have you ever been reluctant to return to the Lord after a season of wandering because you were embarrassed or feared that you had made too big a mess of your life?**

**4. How does the story of the prodigal son contradict that perception?**

**Let's Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace." '**