

## Lost & Found: Luke 15:25-32 Part 4

In this parable we find a picture of our heavenly Father. One who loves both his sons and waits eagerly for the return and reconciliation of each of them. As the story unfolds the older brother is invited by the sounds of music and celebration. Bewildered by such unusual celebration in his home, he inquires into the reason for the celebration and is not pleased with the response. The elder brother was angry and jealous because of all the attention being lavished on “this son of yours (Luke 15:30).” He then unleashes a barrage of accusations against his own flesh and blood. He would not call him his brother, “you never gave me so much as a kid goat, but for him you killed the fattened calf! How is that fair? The elder son’s feelings are mirrored in millions of elder brothers who feel they have been treated unjustly. His words full of anger and bitterness give us the impression that the service he claims to have done for his Father seemed to be “slaving not serving”. But the Father’s attitude is “son you have been with me. We have shared together, planned together, played together, prayed together, laughed together, and worked together. Meanwhile your brother has been absent from our joy. Look what he has missed. He’s been hurt, rejected, shamed, embarrassed, ostracized; we must try to make it up to him. He is back home and we need to celebrate his coming home.” Imagine all this time in the Father’s house but he could not emulate, or even understand the character of his loving Father.

Many Christians harbor a deeply pagan view of the world when they secretly think that the people in the world are the ones who are really enjoying life and having all the fun, when living with the Father is what heaven is all about. Those who live in his presence now are tasting in advance what heaven will be like. We are immature if we think we need a greater reward than his presence, and we are blind to think the sin of the world does not exact its own punishment from which a loving Father wants to redeem us. The Father loved both his sons equally. Their different needs however, required of him different expressions of that love. Wise earthly Fathers also seek to be sensitive to the different needs of their children.

What the Father experiences when his children love each other and share in each other's joy and suffering! Yes, indeed God gains great joy and pleasure from the love and attention his children share with one another. On the other hand, he feels the sharp pain a father feels when his children turn one on another with divisive and bitter emotions. No wonder we are admonished in the Scriptures to love one another. Each of us should pray to the Father "Make me a giver rather than a getter. Make me a healer rather than a hurter. Make me a helper rather than a hinderer, and make me an encourager than a discourager."

As Jesus concludes the parable the Father is pleading with his son to come in and be part of the celebration. Would the elder brother come in and be a part of the joy or is he still waiting outside? How ironic that the one who was far away has returned, while the one who was in the Father's house is still standing outside! Would he swallow his pride, extend his love for his brother and come in? Where are you? Inside with the Father being part of the celebration, or bitter, angry and waiting outside, unable to forgive and forget? How would this parable end; nay how would the story of your life end? Lost and found or lost and...?