

Title: The Father and The Son
Text: Luke 14.25-15.32
Theme: The incomparable value of Christ
Series: Luke
Prop Stmt: Jesus is worth giving up everything for because no one will love you like him.

Read Text:

The President has said that he is going to sue the British Broadcasting Company because the BBC took 2 statements from his speech on January 6, 2021 that occurred more than 50 minutes apart and played them together as if those 2 statements were together. Context determines meaning and without context you do not get the full meaning, or worse, you create a meaning that was never there.

This is one of the reasons why I preach the way I do. I want you to understand the context so that you can properly understand the intent and meaning of the text. We are going through the gospel of Luke. Luke wrote this “orderly account” of the life and ministry of Christ for a man named Theophilus so that he would “*have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*” It is possible that Theophilus was a wealthy man and he paid Luke’s expenses to research all of this and then write this account. But Luke interviewed all sorts of eyewitnesses to the life of Christ and then wrote them down in this account. Again, he is not just recording history. Luke is recording history for a reason. He wants the reader to be confident about the facts of Christ so that the reader knows that when he trusts his life to Christ, he is standing on a solid foundation that cannot be moved. This is my aim in preaching through Luke.

Therefore, in order for us to understand that, like Theophilus, we need to see all of the parts and we need to see how they relate to each other, so that we are not missing chunks of material that were edited out and therefore, risk a faulty or incomplete interpretation. If you only use GPS when you drive, then while you may not technically be lost, neither do you really know where you are. If you only focus on what your next turn is, you do not see the whole map. Therefore, I try to stop and recap so you do not get lost in the weeds and and show you the flow of thought not simply to give you “Aha” moments, but so those bursts of understanding become the basis for your faith, commitment and perseverance. Chapter 15 is a perfect example of this.

Luke gives us much detail about the ministry of Christ in Galilee. Galilee is the region around the Sea of Galilee. Much of the ministry of Christ took place a long way away from Jerusalem. However, in 9.51, Jesus stops meandering around Galilee and starts heading with focus toward Jerusalem. We begin to feel the flame of the burner burn hotter as the words of Christ and the controversy over him intensifies. We begin to get this sense that something big is going to happen. Christ starts laying out the terms for following him and he makes it clear that he will accept nothing less than complete surrender and devotion. This build up brought us to Luke 14.33 where Jesus says, “*So therefore, any of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*” It’s a fork in the road. It’s a sifting, a separating of men and boys, of posers from the real. The great crowds that accompanied him (14.25) are now set back on their heels. This is

not what you would expect from teachers or political/religious leaders? Crazy cult-leaders or fanatics? yes. But from reasonable leaders this is a big ask. What are they going to do? Is this man who amazes us with miracles worth following like that? So that he was not underestimated nor misunderstood, Jesus said (14.34-35) that anything less than complete devotion is no devotion and a complete waste of time. Jesus is clear, he plays for keep. This is the standard. As the reader we are faced with this fork in the road. Are we in? Are we going to believe and be all in? Is Jesus worth it? Then comes these 3 famous parables on the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost sons, and they are famous because they are so amazing. But why did the Spirit of God direct Luke to include them here? Or, more specifically...

1. **How do these parables help us understand Christ's radical call for discipleship?**

Do you see the connection between Christ's call for complete devotion and his powerful heart of mercy? Is Jesus worth your absolute faith and devotion? He demands it. He won't settle for anything less. But, is he worth it? These parables help you answer that by demonstrating what you are signing up for when you commit to follow Christ. The parable of the lost sheep and the shepherd who will leave everything to find you, and the parable of the lost coin and the woman who will not stop until she finds you and the parable of the compassionate Father who will embrace and welcome his sons, helps you answer that question. Who else loves you like this? We all know the sad and destructive stories of people in power who exploit vulnerable people. They demand devotion and trap people with money or threats to get it and keep it. We are therefore, suspicious of people who demand complete surrender.

If you are going to follow Christ above all, then you have to yield the authority of your life to Christ. Is he worth it? Is Jesus worth following over you? These first two parables help us answer that because they tell us what Jesus will do when you are lost. What do powerful people do with 14-year old girls who are lost, vulnerable and desperate? What does Jesus do when you are lost? He will come looking for you. Even if you are trusting in yourself as your own savior and lawgiver, who do you turn to when you have lost your way? Well, that's a problem, isn't it? You lost your way, because you were following your own lead. So, how are you going to get yourself out of the mess that you made for yourself when you have nowhere else to turn? In that moment when you are lost, you realize that following Jesus is worth it, no matter what.

There are some heart-gripping accounts of people who, at great personal expense and loss, gave up their lives in order to rescue others from a fire, from drowning, from certain death in a war, etc. So what makes the shepherd looking for the sheep and the woman looking for the coin different or better? Good question. Let's say that you are swimming in the ocean near the beach and you are attacked by a shark and you are gravely injured. A lifeguard risks his or her life to rescue you but just because you get to the shore, does not mean that your life can be spared from your injuries. Just because someone loves you and is willing to sacrifice for you, does not mean that they can actually save you in the ultimate sense. Again, you may get to the shore and may have your life spared, but no lifeguard, no good Samaritan has the power and means to forgive you for your sin and grant you eternal life. You need a Shepherd who is a Savior.

In these parables we see and feel the heart of God for us. God is a righteous God, but he loves to display his mercy and he loves to display his mercy to you. The 3 parables in Luke 15, were told in response to the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees grumbling because tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to hear Jesus. These parables were for both parts of his audience. All three display the joy of God in recovering what was lost. This was intended to be an encouragement to the tax collectors and sinners and a corrective to the self-righteous. In the parable of the Father and the sons, the Father is merciful to both. Both groups are offered mercy. This is our God! So, yes, he is worth your absolute faith and devotion.

2. How do these parables help us think better about forgiveness?

- The son owes a debt to his father, he can never repay.

Even if he could pay back to the estate, with interest what he squandered, he did untold damage to his father's reputation. This is our condition. Our sin before God puts us in debt to God. We owe a debt that we can never repay. The wages of sin is death.

- Because of Christ, God has forgiven our obscenely high debt that we could never repay.

How could the death of Christ pay for our debt? Christ was the infinite God/man. His righteous life was the perfect, infinite, and sufficient capital to atone for and pay for. When Christ died, he died as an offering, in our place. He offered up his perfect life in our place and provided the payment that we could never afford. His death satisfied our debt. Why did God plan this and why did Christ do this? God planned this because God is righteous and merciful. Therefore...

- Following Christ means to be embraced by a massive heart of mercy.

The death of Christ satisfies the justice of God against our sin, which unleashes the mercy of God to embrace us, restore us, welcome us, adopt us, justify us, and seal us as his own, forever. As a forgiven sinner (saint, child of God) I have been bought with a price. I am not my own and I am the recipient of God's happy, infinite mercy. God delights in showing mercy to me and you. I am a follower of Christ because of the mercy of God. When I became a follower of Christ, the Spirit of God took up residence in me. What kind of a Spirit is He? The Spirit is just like the Father and the Son. The Spirit delights in mercy and part of his ministry in our lives is to cultivate mercy in us. Therefore...

- Following Christ means to display a massive heart of mercy.

I understanding that the cost of my forgiveness from God was the infinite payment of Christ. I sinned against an infinitely holy God. If God stood on his tiptoes in anticipation of my repentance, and if, when he saw me turning to come home he ran to embrace me, then shouldn't I be on my tiptoes in anticipation and hope for those who have sinned against me? Better yet, shouldn't I be on my knees praying for them? Actually, I need to be on my knees praying for me to have a merciful heart so that long for them to repent. My sin against God is

infinitely greater than any sin against me. God delights in forgiving me and saving me, so I can delight in forgiving others.

- Forgiveness is a choice that is triggered by repentance.

When God forgives us, he makes a decision to remove our transgression from between us. He does not bring it up again, nor talk to others about it, nor let this hinder our relationship. Therefore, when we forgive (as God in Christ) has forgiven us (Eph 4.32), we are making a choice and a promise. We are choosing to not dwell on this offense, to not use the offense as a weapon against the other person, to not talk about it to anyone and to not allow it to hinder our relationship. This is how we are forgiven and how we are called to forgive. This means that...

- Forgiveness is not making excuses for the sin.

Forgiveness does not minimize sin, excuse sin, gloss over it, or act like it is not a big deal. Sin is a big deal. Offering forgiveness takes the offense seriously, but forgiving others is directly linked to the forgiveness we have in Christ. Therefore, as I consider just how deeply I am loved, and how much I have been forgiven, and how much delight God gains in showing mercy, I need to give specific attention to the seriousness of the offense and the glorious significance of forgiveness. If the other person is genuinely grieved over their sin, I honor them by taking them and their grief seriously. But what if the other person has not repented?

- Forgiveness is offered in the heart (posture or readiness) and formally granted when repentance is displayed.

If the other person does not repent, we are not called to pretend that the offense never occurred. While God desires to show mercy, he does not willy nilly forgive without repentance. So too, we may forgive in our hearts, that is, not hold on to bitterness, nor hold on to our "right" to be judge, jury and executioner, but instead, be prepared to forgive by forgiving in our hearts.

- Forgiveness does not eliminate consequences (for now).

While the younger son was restored, his share of the estate was gone. Everything that was left now belonged to the older son. But the relationship was restored. The standing of the younger son was restored. If I back into your car in the parking lot and I acknowledge that I was in the wrong and ask for your forgiveness, should you forgive me? Yes. Does that mean that I do not have to pay for you for the damages? No. If I am truly sorry for what I have done, then I own what I have done along with the consequences. If I lie to you 3 times, and 3 times I confess my sin and ask you for forgiveness, should you forgive me? Should I expect or demand that you believe me the next time I make a promise or tell a story? No. In fact, I should expect that you would be hesitant to believe me because I repeatedly broke your trust. That is part of me owning my sin and the consequences of it. Should you be willing to allow me to rebuild trust? Yes. But depending on how long and how severe the deception took place, that may take a long time and I need to own the ramifications of my sin as part of owning my sin. When God forgives

us, he sees the true condition of our hearts. Others do not. They don't know if you are lying again, which is why lying about repentance is so damaging. If you forgive someone based on their confession of sin, only to discover that they were still covering up their sin, then their confession is incomplete. You may have truly forgiven them in your heart, but now, the transaction is not valid and the relationship is not restored.

Our posture is to be merciful like our Father in heaven is merciful. But mercy is not cheap and neither is mercy to be abused. If I am frustrated that I am living the earthly consequences of my sin, I can thank God that He does not hold my sin against me, even though I am reminded of what I did from my circumstances. The consequences may feel unfair, but if I really demanded justice, then I would have to pay for my own sin, and 10,000 years in hell cannot do that. So, again, our posture is to be ready to forgive. Our posture is to be merciful even while we recognize that mercy is serious and beautiful, costly and deliberate.

3. How do these parables help us think clearer about Christ?

- Jesus is the Shepherd.

In John 10, Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. He also knows his sheep and his sheep listen to his voice. In that same chapter, Jesus says, "I and the Father are one."

- Jesus is the woman who will not stop looking until what she has lost is recovered.

At the end of his most famous Psalm, David said, "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever." A horror movie is when an unstoppable force of evil follows you, no matter what. The complete opposite of that is your Savior and King who will stop at nothing to bring you back to him.

- Jesus is the older brother who came after us to reconcile us to the Father.

Tax Collectors and sinners get worn out by their sin. The cost of sin is massive. To know that there is someone who loves you, even though they tell you the truth, is the knot on the end of the rope that keeps you from making it a noose and putting it around neck. Being a pharisee and a scribe is exhausting as well. Keeping up the façade of a rule-keeper and the expectation of being a shame-dumper on others, is a fearful thing. Here is a picture of what God is really like and this story is being told by his Son, who knows better than anyone else. He is worth following. Way more than your sin and way more than your self-righteousness.

During the Vietnam War Army Lt. Daniel Dawson was shot down over the Vietcong jungle. His brother Donald got word, while in the states and he immediately sold everything he could in order to raise the funds to get to Vietnam to personally look for his brother. His story is heroic and speaks volumes of the love he had for his brother. He did not find his brother, and in fact was captured by the Vietcong and held prisoner for a month before being released. He was

willing to die in order to find his brother. In the end, he did neither, but it wasn't for lack of effort.

We have an older brother, named Christ. He was not only willing to come and look for us, and was willing to die for us, but he did, actually die for us. And what is more, he actually found us and rescued us and brought us back into the arms of our Father, where heaven awaits a party for our coming home. This is our amazing God. Who else will love you like this? Trust him!