

**THE POWER OF ONE TO GIVE GRACE  
LUKE 15  
FEBRUARY 3, 2008 A.M.  
SERIES: "THE POWER OF ONE"  
SERMON #5**

**INTRODUCTION**

- A. "AS JESUS SAT DOWN TO TEACH, HIS EYES SWEEPED ACROSS THE HODGEPODGE OF HUMANITY THAT WAS EAGERLY GATHERING AROUND HIM. AS USUAL, IT WAS NEITHER THE COMMUNITY'S BEST NOR ITS BRIGHTEST WHO SOUGHT HIS WISDOM TODAY. TAX PROFITEERS WERE HERE. PLEASURE SEEKERS WERE HERE. IT WAS A REPRESENTATIVE ASSORTMENT OF THE UNWASHED MASSES DISMISSIVELY REFERRED TO AS 'SINNERS'. THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TOOK THEIR USUAL POST ON THE PERIPHERY OF THE CROWD---STRATEGIC PLACEMENT FOR MURMURING AND WHISPERING CAUSTIC COMMENTARY, ALSO FOR AVOIDING DREADED PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH THE CEREMONIALLY IMPURE."**

- B. THE ABOVE QUOTE IS TAKEN FROM “CAPTURED BY GRACE” BY DAVID JEREMIAH. IT IS HIS ACCOUNT OF JESUS’S STORIES OF LOST AND FOUND AS TOLD IN LUKE 15.**
- C. JESUS ACTUALLY TELLS THREE STORIES.**
- 1. HE TELLS THE STORY OF A LOST SHEEP.**
  - 2. A LOST COIN.**
  - 3. A LOST SON.**
- D. CHARLES DICKENS CALLS THIS “THE GREATEST SHORT STORY OF ALL TIME.”**
- E. THE PAINTER REMBRANDT PAINTED THIS SCENE AS A REFLECTION OF HIS OWN LIFE.**
- 1. IN HIS EARLY YEARS HE PAINTED HIMSELF IN AS THE WANDERING SON IN THE STORY.**
  - 2. HE RETURNED TO THE PAINTING IN HIS LATER YEARS TO PAINT HIMSELF IN AS THE LOVING FATHER, EMBRACING THE CHILD.**

- F. YEARS LATER THE CHRISTIAN WRITER, HENRI NOUWEN, WAS SO CHANGED BY THIS PAINTING HE WROTE A MASTER PIECE, “THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL”, WHICH WAS NAMED AFTER THE PAINTING ITSELF.**
- G. I BELIEVE THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS STORY IS THE STORY OF “GRACE”.**
- 1. GOD TAKES GREAT INITIATIVE TO GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO BRING BACK THOSE WHO ARE ESTRANGED FROM HIM.**
  - 2. RECLAIMING SUCH PEOPLE SHOULD LEAD TO JOYOUS CELEBRATION.**
  - 3. THE FAITHFULNESS OF THE MAJORITY MAY NEVER EXCUSE US IGNORING ANYONE WHO STILLS REMAINS DISTANT FROM GOD.**
- H. THE STORY OF GRACE IS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF THREE PERSONS: THE YOUNGER SON, THE FATHER, AND THE ELDER BROTHER.**

- I. A PRODIGAL IN NEED OF HELP.
  - A. VS. 11-19. THE YOUNG MAN WANTS HIS INHERITANCE WHICH WOULD BE ABOUT 1/3 OF HIS FATHER'S ESTATE.
    - 1. HE REBELLED AGAINST EVERYTHING HE HAD BEEN TAUGHT IN LIFE.
    - 2. LONG BEFORE HE LEFT HOME PHYSICALLY, HE HAD DONE SO SPIRITUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY.
    - 3. WHEN HE DID LEAVE HE LEFT FOR A "FAR AWAY COUNTRY."
    - 4. LIFE REALLY CRASHES FOR HIM. HE BECOMES THE EPITOME OF "A JEWISH MAN ON SKID ROW."
    - 5. HE COMES TO HIMSELF. HE REALIZES HE NEEDS HELP.
  - B. LEAVING HOME IS A DENIAL OF THE SPIRITUAL REALITY THAT I BELONG TO GOD?
    - 1. WHY WOULD ANYONE LEAVE AN ENVIRONMENT LIKE THIS?
    - 2. THE VOICE OF LOVE IS A QUIET

VOICE.

3. THERE ARE MUCH LOUDER VOICES THAT ARE VERY SEDUCTIVE.
4. VOICES THAT PLEAD WITH YOU TO GO OUT AND PROVE YOU MATTER.

C. THE FAR COUNTRY IS NOT DEFINED, BECAUSE IT CAN BE ANYWHERE.

1. NO MATTER WHERE YOU LIVE THERE IS A FAR COUNTRY.
2. ALL YOU NEED IS A SINFUL NATURE AND A RESTLESS SOUL.”

D. EVEN WHEN THINGS GET REALLY TOUGH YOU MAY NOT BE READY FOR GRACE.

1. AS TOUCHING AS IT IS THAT THE YOUNG MAN CAME TO HIMSELF AND WANTED TO RETURN HOME, HE DIDN'T REALIZE THE POWER OF GRACE.

2. HE WAS CONTENT WITH BEING A HIRED SERVANT, WORKING THE REST OF HIS LIFE TO PAY BACK THE DEBT HE OWED TO HIS FATHER.

II. A FATHER CONSUMED BY COMPASSION.

A. VS. 20-24.

1. THE PRODIGAL RETURNS, BUT HIS APPEARANCE HAS CHANGED. THE CONFIDENCE, EVEN ARROGANCE, THAT ONCE WAS HIS, IS NOW GONE. HE IS THE PICTURE OF DEFEAT, SHAME, SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL POVERTY AND TOTAL DEJECTION.
2. THE FATHER RECOGNIZES HIM IMMEDIATELY, BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN LOOKING FOR HIM.
3. THE FATHER IS IN NO HURRY TO HEAR THE HORRIBLE DETAILS OF HIS STORY.
4. THE FATHER IS CONCERNED WITH ONLY ONE THING. THROWING THE BEST PARTY THAT REGION HAD EVERY WITNESSED.

5. HE PROVIDED HIS OWN ROBE  
AND RING FOR HIS SON.
- B. THE HERO OF THE STORY IS THE  
FATHER.
1. REMBRANDT WAS RIGHT WHEN  
HE PLACED THE FATHER AT  
THE CENTER OF THE CANVAS.
  2. IN 20 VERSES THE FORGIVING  
FATHER IS MENTIONED 12  
TIMES.
- C. THE RESPONSE OF THE FATHER IS THE  
RESPONSE OF GRACE.
1. "GRACE OVERWHELMS GUILT."
  2. IT TAKES THE DEEP LOVE OF  
THE SEARCHER TO REDEEM  
THE SON.
  3. QUESTION: DID THE COIN OR  
THE SHEEP FIND THEMSELVES?  
THE ANSWER IS NO.
  4. NEITHER DID THE SON.  
NEITHER WILL YOU.
- D. YOU MUST EXPERIENCE AND  
EMBRACE THE GRACE OF THE  
FATHER IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE  
FREEDOM FROM GUILT AND SHAME.

III. A SINNER WHO THOUGHT HE WAS A SAINT.

A. VS. 25-31.

1. HE WAS A SON, LIVING LIKE A SERVANT. VS. 29.
  - a. HE WAS ABOUT EARNING HIS WAY AND PROVING HIS WORTH.
  - b. HE DID NOT COMPREHEND GRACE WHATSOEVER.
2. HE WAS A SINNER WHO THOUGHT HE WAS A SAINT.
  - a. THE YOUNGER BROTHER HAD BEEN IN THE FAR COUNTRY OF SENSUALITY AND LICENTIOUSNESS.

- b. THE OLDER BROTHER WAS IN THE FAR COUNTRY OF PRIDE AND SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.
    - 3. HE WAS AS MISERABLE AS HIS YOUNGER BROTHER.
- B. LAW AND LICENTIOUSNESS WILL MAKE YOU A SLAVE.
- C. VS. 31 SUMMARIZES WHAT HE BEGAN IN THE FIRST PART OF THIS CHAPTER.
  - 1. NOW THE REACTION OF THE CROWD.
  - 2. THE PRODIGALS IN THE CROWD WERE BROKEN BY GRACE.
  - 3. THE PHARISEES IN THE CROWD COULDN'T UNDERSTAND THE LOST THINGS AND DIDN'T IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH THE ELDER BROTHER.
- D. DAVID JEREMIAH SUMMARIZES THE CHAPTER THIS WAY. "JESUS MIGHT WELL HAVE ADDED, YOU PHARISEES HAVE MORE FACTS ABOUT GOD THAN ANYONE. YOU ARE WALKING ENCYCLOPEDIAS OF HOLINESS. YOU KNOW WHAT YOU NEED TO DO. AS FOR ME, I'M HERE TO KEEP WATCH

ON THE LONELY ROAD, AT THE EDGE  
OF THE VILLAGE, THAT HIGHWAY TO  
THE FAR COUNTRY. I KNOW THE  
NAME OF EVERY SOUL WHO  
WANDERS THAT ROAD. I KNOW THE  
PAIN OF THE HEARTACHE THEY FEEL.  
AND I AM HERE TO TELL THEM WHAT  
YOU WILL NOT TELL THEM. I AM  
HERE TO PUT A ROBE OF PURE WHITE  
UPON THEIR SHOULDERS, TO HIDE  
THEIR SODDEN RAGS FOREVER. AND  
I AM HERE TO LAY DOWN MY LIFE  
AND TAKE ON EVERY STROKE OF  
PUNISHMENT THEY HAVE EARNED,  
BECAUSE I CAN BEAR IT AND THEY  
CANNOT. AFTER THAT, IF YOU WILL  
BUT WALK THROUGH THIS OPEN  
DOOR—WE’LL THROW PARTIES THAT  
WILL PUT THE FAR COUNTRY TO  
SHAME.”

- E. WILL THE CHURCH BE THE CHURCH  
OF THE ELDER BROTHER OR THE  
CHURCH OF THE LOVING FATHER?