



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

1, 2 Kings Sermon Series

Supports Session 5: Return

Sermon Title: "I'm Coming Home" (Luke 15:11-20)

Connection to 1 Kings 15:9-22

Returning to God's ways is a theme throughout the Scriptures. We find this in the Old Testament when Asa became king of Judah and led the people to do what was right in God's sight. We find this in the New Testament in the parable of the prodigal son.

Introduction/Opening

The word *prodigal* means to be wasteful or reckless. We all probably know someone who fits this definition. Our own lives may have been defined as wasteful or reckless at one point. Today's message is the story of the prodigal son. Yes, he lived a portion of his life in an extremely wasteful and reckless manner. But, when he came to his senses, he turned towards home and returned to a loving father. So, if you are a prodigal or know a prodigal, today's message of return and restoration is for you and me.

Outline

1. His Wayward Journey

a) His focus was self (v. 12). The story of the prodigal begins with a young man who is completely focused on himself. He approached his dad and demanded his share of the estate. This young man was emphatic about his request. We would be accurate in saying that his voice could have been raised and his patience was beyond short. Another key element in this verse is that his dad was still alive. It would be as if the young man was telling his dad, "I wish you were already dead."

A journey away from the things we know to be correct begins with a focus on self. The young man was focused on his so-called needs, and we can be guilty of the same thing. We believe we need that big promotion, so we fudge the books to make the bottom line look better. Or we need that certain grade to make the team, so we borrow a few answers from our neighbor. The journey of a prodigal begins with a focus on self.

b) His focus was stuff (v. 13). As soon as he received his inheritance, he set out on his journey. The Bible says that he traveled to a distant land. This indicates that he wanted to get as far away from his father as possible and he did this quickly.

The Bible also says that he squandered his estate in foolish living. He liquidated the estate as quickly as possible and then proceeded to go through it just as quickly. He wanted fame and he blew through his fortune to get it.

2. His Turning Towards Home

a) He hit bottom (v. 14-16). The young man's journey took a turn for the worse when a severe famine struck. He began working in a pig pen. If it could have gone wrong for this young man, it was going wrong. He had high hopes when he started this journey and now all his hopes were dashed. Before we can truly start our journey home, we need to hit bottom. This young man had hit bottom and some of us are able to identify with him.

b) He came to his senses (v. 17). Hope arrived because the young man came to his senses. Sometimes we are all guilty of blaming God for our bad circumstances. Reality is that our poor decisions have caused our bad circumstances and we, like the prodigal son, need to come to our senses. Instead of cursing God for our bad circumstances, let's look for Him amid our mess and ask Him to help us come to our senses too.

c) He accepted responsibility (v. 18-19). Have you ever noticed how easy it is to blame others? We blame those in leadership and fail to ponder if we have anything to do with the problem. This is not new as it started in Genesis 3. Eve blamed the snake and Adam blamed Eve and God. The prodigal son accepted responsibility. He said that he had sinned and was no longer worthy to be called his dad's son. We do not see any excuses added at the confession. The first official step towards home began right here. He accepted responsibility and was willing to be a hired worker for his dad.

d) He went home (v. 20). After he had rehearsed his speech, he got up and went home. The passage reveals a specific and personal choice on his part. He did not try to find someone to go in his place to determine if his father would accept him. He chose to get up and go home. The passage does not indicate that he cleaned up first. He had been working in a pig pen, came to his senses and then started home. All too often, we feel like we must clean up our act before we return to our heavenly Father. As the story indicates, He is willing to accept us as is. He will change us from the inside out, but He accepts us no matter how bad we might smell.

Conclusion

What happened when the young man got home? Did the father even speak to him upon his return? Not only did the father speak to his son, but he also embraced him, kissed him, and then had a grand celebration because his son had come home. The young man in this story represents us. We, like the prodigal, have all sinned and fallen short of God's plan. Many of us may live in fear of coming back to the Father. While He will allow us to experience the consequences for our decisions, He is also quick to embrace us when we return to Him. Let's all learn from the prodigal son today. Let's come to our senses and come home to a heavenly Father that loves us and is ready to embrace us.

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