

The Son Who Stayed Home.

Text: Luke 15:25-32

Suggested Hymns:

317, 352, 305, 353, 508

1) His Sulking Disposition

2) His Self-Righteousness

3) Passed Up Many Pleasures

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 15:25-32, ²⁵ *“Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.”* ²⁶ *“So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.”* ²⁷ *“And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’”* ²⁸ *“But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.”*

²⁹ *“So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.”* ³⁰ *‘But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’* ³¹ *“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.”* ³² *‘It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’”* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today’s Gospel lesson and the sermon text, both tell of the situation where someone was not happy that another person repented of their sins and was saved. There is much rejoicing over the lost sheep, coin, and son when they are found. The Gospel lesson says, ¹⁰ *“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

I am sure that you have heard the story of the Prodigal Son before. It is the story of a boy who had everything that any boy could expect in life. He had a

happy home life, loving parents, enough clothes, sufficient food, and money to spend. All these were his, and yet he wasn't satisfied.

He was tired of staying at home. He wanted a new experience, a high adventure in a far-off country. He rebelled against the restraints that a well-ordered home life required. He wanted to be free from his parents without inhibitions and without discipline.

Therefore the Prodigal Son asked his father for the inheritance that was due to him. After all, he would receive it someday, why not now, before he became too old and decrepit to enjoy it? Without a question, his father gave it to him. And now with a pocket full of money and a song in his heart he set out for the far-away country.

There he had a good time. He gained his new experience, and there he had his high adventure. But he wasted his goods with wild living. He made many friends, but these were loyal only as long as he had money to spend. After rounds of revelry, the inheritance was soon gone, and so were his friends.

But worst of all, there was a famine in the land about that time, and it was difficult to get work. In order to keep body and soul together, the wayward son attached himself to a citizen of that country who offered him the job of looking after pigs and he ate of the husks that the pigs ate.

Finally, the boy "*came to himself*" and realised that he had been very foolish. He remembered the good things of a former day in his father's house. He dreamed of the food that he could once enjoy, the clothes that he once wore, and the loving care of his parents.

So he resolved to go back home with a penitent heart and to be received merely as a servant. He did not think himself worthy to become a son again, for he had squandered his inheritance and had broken a father's heart. He memorised his speech carefully, "*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.*"¹

But he did not have to make that speech. For, when he was a long way off, his father saw him coming, and he ran to meet him. The father was so happy to receive the wayward son that he fell on his neck and kissed him. It was enough that he came back home, even though he was filthy, untidy, and in rags.

Immediately a feast was prepared, and all in the household rejoiced that the son who was lost was found.

This is the story of God's ways with wayward children. His sons have everything that they could expect and that a human heart could desire. Yet they are not satisfied, and they desire only too often a new experience. They become weary of religious restraints and godly discipline. They leave the Father's house, and they wander into a far country, filling themselves with the filth of a sordid world.

But the Father does not forget them, although they have forgotten the Father. He calls them home again by sending some unfortunate experience into their little lives. Then they remember the Father's loving heart, the kindness and the tenderness of a former day. With a repentant heart they return and come back home, telling the Father that they are not worthy to be called His sons. And a Father's heart is big enough in its love, and He forgives them and reinstates them as His sons.

However, there is a sequel to the story of the Prodigal Son. It is a story complete in itself, the story of the son who stayed home. He was one that did not rejoice over his brother's return, because he was of a sulking disposition, a self-righteous individual, and consequently he missed many joys.

Thus he represents the sordid side of the human personality. And we might as well be honest with ourselves and realise that he represents the sinful nature of us all. Let us consider "*The son who stayed home.*" May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Son Who Stayed Home His Sulking Disposition

It was the night of the Prodigal son's return. The son who stayed home was still out in the field and just about ready to come in for supper. He had worked hard all day, and now at evening he was very tired. He noticed that there was a great deal of activity in the household and he heard the music and the dancing. So he asked one of the servants what all the fuss and flurry was about.

He knew what it was all about. Day after day he had seen his father look down the dusty road, expecting the Prodigal's return. He just didn't want to

admit that he knew. After all, he wasn't getting the attention that the brother was getting.

No one was celebrating his return at the evening of a hard day's work. No one was giving him any recognition for working his fingers to the bone day after day. Why should such a fuss be made over his brother who ran away from home and spent his substance with harlots? He sulked and would not participate in the joy of his brother's return. Why should anyone waste time and effort, and even the fatted calf, which he himself had raised, simply because someone came back home? The son who stayed home had a soured, sulking disposition and attitude.

As such he represents many people of today, those who stayed in the Father's house. They see all joy and happiness caused by just one sinner who repents and comes back home. But they won't participate because no one ever made a fuss over them, although they stayed in the Father's house all the time.

No one ever appreciates their efforts in the work of the Kingdom, and now one who has wasted his goods and has come back home receives much honour and recognition. Some people are like that. Their very disposition is one of sour grapes. They see only the gloomy side of things, they see only shadows in a world of sunshine.

God has intended for people to be happy and cheerful. For that reason He has given us the pleasant things of life to enjoy that they might make merry the hearts of men. He has given us the trees with the laughter of the wind blowing through their leaves. He has given us the babbling brooks with their waters racing to the ocean and from there to return again. He has given us the mountains to lift our eyes heavenward and to make us realise that our help and our strength comes from God who made heaven and earth.

God has given us music to thrill us, and all the things of beauty to be a joy forever. For that same reason, so that we might be happy forever, God has sent His only-begotten Son that through Him we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly.

That was the Saviour's last wish on the last night before His death. Jesus asked His Father in heaven that His own "*may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.*"² That night, although the atmosphere was charged with sorrow and dark anticipation, yet there was to be joy and gladness when all would be

finished. Even though they would have sorrow for a moment, their sorrow would be turned into joy, and their joy no man should take from them. Writing to the Philippians, St. Paul says, ***“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.”***³

Christians, therefore, should be the most happy people of all. Theirs should never be a gloomy disposition because they always have a reason to be cheerful. Especially when they see a Prodigal’s return, their attitude should be one of happiness and of cheerfulness. After all, there is enough to thrill the hearts of men even when they do stay home in the Father’s house. These are the joys that were missed by the son who stayed home. He missed them because he was self-righteous.

2. The Son Who Stayed Home His Self-Righteousness

The son who stayed home looked only to himself and to his own interests. His little world revolved around himself as the axis. He did not have the larger vision of the needs and wants and thoughts and desires of his fellow men. For as soon as the father noticed his sulking disposition, he asked him to participate in the festivity.

But the elder son would not go in, but said, ***‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.*** He wanted his father to know that he had been a very good son. He had not asked for his inheritance ahead of time as his brother had done. He had always obeyed his father’s command and had faithfully performed all his duties.

He had never gone contrary to his father’s wishes. He wanted his father to know that he had not left home and had not spent his substance with wild living. And yet, even though he had been such a faithful son, his father had never staged a celebration for him. His father had never even killed a kid for him, much less the fatted calf. His friends had never been asked to come and enjoy music and dancing.

But now, as soon as the Prodigal returns, a celebration is put on. Even though the Prodigal had transgressed every commandment in the book, had broken the father’s heart, had come home in rags, yet a ring is placed on his

finger, shoes on his feet, and a robe on his shoulder. Perhaps the son who stayed home had made a good point here.

But let us not forget to whom and under what circumstances the Saviour told this story. He was telling it to the scribes and Pharisees after they had accused Him of receiving sinners and eating with them. They thought that Jesus certainly should not associate with these low and base characters. Rather Jesus ought to associate with people who had not fallen so low as the tax-collectors and sinners. Surely Jesus should associate with those who *“were better than other men.”*

So the Saviour wanted them to know why He associated with the tax-collectors and sinners. They had repented and had come back to the Father’s house. They had been re-instated into the Father’s loving care, and for that reason there was joy and gladness and festivity, even among the angels in heaven.

After all, well people do not need a doctor, but those who are sick and recognise their need of help will go to the doctor. The Prodigal, therefore, represents those that have come back home, and the son who stayed home represents the self-righteous. The Pharisees were the self-righteous who thought that they needed no repentance. They thought they had always kept the laws of God, and why should there be such a fuss made over the lonely sinner who comes back home?

Such an attitude is still in evidence today. There are those who think that they have always kept the Father’s house rules. They believe that they have never caused their Father any trouble. They have never been arrested. They have never molested anyone. They have never stolen. They have never caused their parents any sorrow or their children any shame. They have always been respectable citizens. They have not been as other men are, *“extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.”*⁴

But how about the matters of mercy and kindness? Have they had a loving attitude toward the less fortunate? Have they been considerate of the poor and the homeless? Have they given clothing to the naked, food to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty? Have they ever visited the sick and the imprisoned? The outward laws they might have kept, but not the spirit of the Law.

And then, how about the matters of judgment? Have they always been tolerant of others, or can they see only the speck that is in the brother’s eye?

Patience, meekness, forgiveness — these and many other virtues they have neglected. They are as whited graves, but full of dead men’s bones. That was the trouble with the son who stayed home. His attitude was one of self-righteousness.

3. The Son Who Stayed Home Passed Up Many Pleasures

The son who stayed home might have missed many joys of a far-away country. He might have missed the fun of wild living. He didn’t leave home to spend his life and his substance in the pleasures of sin. But is that joy? I doubt that it is joy. It certainly isn’t happiness. The thrills may be great, but they are certainly only momentary. There is no true joy in the *“lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life.”*

There is no joy in the selling of the soul for anything. These joys and thrills end in dust and ashes, in remorse and regrets, in a seared soul, and in a burnt-out body. These fleeting joys and thrills were passed up by the son who stayed home, and it was well for him that he did.

The son who stayed home also missed the joy of repentance. There is a pleasure in discovering one’s self. There is a joy in finding one’s self, the origin, the purpose, and the destiny of life. It is the most marvellous discovery to know one’s self, to know yourself in the light of the past, and of the present, and of the future. This joy the son who stayed home had to miss, for he had not *“come to himself”* as did the son who wandered away.

He missed the joy of true repentance which says to the Father, *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,”*¹⁹ *“and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”* Consequently he could not share in the father’s happiness over a sinner who repents, the joy of a father over a son that had found himself, the joy of a father’s waiting arms and endearing kiss.

Finally, the son who stayed home missed the joy of seeing the soul of a brother restored to an anxious father. He wasn’t happy that his brother came home, because he had made no effort to bring him back. He was satisfied to see his brother run the road that leads to death and destruction. He wasn’t concerned about the soul that was rapidly going to ruin.

This same joy is missed by many a person who stays home even today. They are the people who make no effort to bring back the lost and the erring. They are not concerned about the souls of people who are dying, but who need not die. They are satisfied to stay home and to say nothing about the Father's great love in sending His Son for the redemption of the world.

However, those people who do make an effort in bringing the lost and the straying back to the Father's waiting arms, have experienced a joy that cannot be described. They have seen the light of God in the eyes of a forgiven soul, the light of a devotion to God, the light of a heart burning with love and zeal to do the Father's will. Their speech is like the music of angels, and their loyalty to the Father's house is from that time on unbroken.

So, that is the story of the son who stayed home. It is a pathetic story, a story of a man who sulked in his doleful disposition, the story of a self-righteous individual, the story of a man who missed earth's and heaven's greatest joys.

It is the story without an ending, because the last we see of the son who stayed home, the father is still standing there pleading with him to change his attitude. Wouldn't we rather have seen him come into his father's house so that he might participate in the joy of sins forgiven and souls redeemed in the presence of God and His holy angels? Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 15:18

² John 17:13

³ Phil. 4:4

⁴ Luke 18:11