

Introduction:

- Review May 1st, 2022 notes.
 - Insights To the Wayward
 - Pre wayward - No pain just freedom, Mid wayward - Freedom begins shifting to pain and control begins to be lost, post wayward - No freedom just pain. Each level requires a different prayer strategy and way of interaction.
 - Prayer for the prodigals: Get 'em but be gentle and merciful, Lord change me, May life's pain point them to the cross, Use their friends, speak the word and trust Holy Spirit to work.
 - My Posture in Prayer - how we are to position our lives.
- *"And he said, 'There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 'But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.' " And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."* (Luke 15:11-20, ESV)
- Two weeks ago: I will use the terms 'wayward son' and 'prodigal son' interchangeably. My preference is to use wayward son because it more accurately communicates. So today we will look at three points from this text: They will return, Home must be attractive, and I must be ready for their return.

I. They Will Return - Prophetic word of return. The wayward son came to his senses.

- A. For clarity. We have to be clear as we progress today.
 1. The Father in our text is God. Many of you, like God, have prodigals...but you are not God. Therefore, you will need some help which I intend to give you.
 2. The younger son represents those who have gone their own selfish way. Is 53:6
 3. The older son represents the 'religious' who cannot stand the younger son nor the Father for whom they work.
- B. The wayward ones will return. That is a great prophetic promise, spoken by many prophets today, that many of you are hanging onto.
 1. Some translations, like NLT say, *"I will return home."* Most translations, state: *I will arise and go to my father.* Either way, the wayward son is returning to the place of his beginning.
 2. I like personally like, *"I will go to my Father."* It makes a big difference what you return to! What you return to tells me lots about you. Are you returning home or are you returning to father? Are you returning to a place or to a relationship? Big difference.
- C. How will they return? There are basically three ways prodigals return:

1. Prodigals can return unchanged – some prodigals realize things are better at home. Therefore, they move home to ‘bum’ off of you. They want no responsibilities other than to eat your food, enjoy your AC, and have you fill up their car. If you think that is a prodigal that has returned, you are mistaken. Wake up! Don’t be an enabler. Get out of God’s way.
 2. Prodigals can return wounded – these are wayward sons and daughters whose choices have left them empty, broken, wounded, rejected and in despair. They have not experienced a heart change. They are ‘down on their luck.’ They need to be loved. You can’t expect them to be Christ-like and moral. They are open to hear about Christ.
 3. Prodigals can return changed – these wayward ones have ‘hit bottom.’ They are changed or ready to change. The single most profound characteristic of a wayward one returning is humility!
 4. The difference between a wayward son’s return or wayward son’s humble return, are night and day. Don’t say my prodigal has returned if they are there just to ‘bum’ off of you. Each one of the above will require a different response from you. Be wise!
- D. What shape/what condition will they be in when they return?
1. They will be tired! Tired of running, tired of surviving, tired of doing things on their own strength. It could easily be labeled depressed.
 2. They may be addicted, diseased, broken hearted, in debt. Just because the wayward son or daughter has returned does not mean that they are well, healed and good to go.
 3. FYI: The wayward one’s return is not meant to heal your broken heart, your anger or your unforgiveness. You need to deal with that before they return. When they return it is all about them and their relationship with God! Ie. Like a newborn who gets all the attention and care. I am talking about the wayward one who humbly returns. In fact the Father says, *“he was dead but now is alive”* vss 28,32 **“anazáō**. This rare word, meaning “to become alive again,” “to rise again,” is used figuratively in Lk. 15:24” Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). In *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (p. 296). W.B. Eerdmans. IE. as in a resurrection relationship! That is a prodigal that has returned...Home!

II. Home Must Be Attractive

- A. If the wayward child returns home. What will he find? In other words, home must be attractive if you want them to stay. *“How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!”* Lk 15:17 ESV
1. This text speaks volumes about the Father. It should, because the Father is God!
 2. Many servants... “Many” meaning the father can afford to hire them. The father abounds!
 3. More than enough bread... ‘More’ meaning Father treats His servants very well.
 4. I perish, but not them...Meaning Father has a caring heart for those he employs.
 5. We also know the Father saw him a long ways off. He was looking and he had not forgotten the steps of his son.
 6. The Father ran to the son. He was eager to greet him, to hold him, to kiss him.
 7. Will your wayward child find this to be the case when he or she returns?

- B. We are not God but we had better be the closest thing to God that our child experiences when they return.
 - 1. *"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image...'"* (Genesis 1:26, ESV)
 - 2. That is our job as parents and believers. We exist to help others become like their Father in heaven! We want the prodigal to find God at home...like Jesus, *"If you have seen me you have seen the Father."* Jn 14:9 We are to model God to our wayward ones.
 - 3. One of our tasks is to create a holy jealousy for God and the things of God. Jealousy for something creates desire. In a positive sense our relationship with God is to create a holy desire in the wayward one to want what we have in our relationship with God.
 - 4. The real hero of the Prodigals story is the Father and the action he takes. Fathering is not a passive business. Good fathers take action, accurate action; *"taking action out of love unto love. A father who takes action becomes the hero of the Story. The result of love is action that demonstrates what is going on in the heart."* Paul Manwaring, Things Fathers Do, p. 71. The father's actions demonstrate what was going on in his heart!
- C. Parents create the culture, foundation, and how we experience home. *"Home is an address in the heart. Home is a sense of shared covering, shared commitment, and a mutual experience of love, support and encouragement. When all of these come together in our hearts, we find home."* Paul Manwaring, Things Fathers Do, p. 73.
 - 1. The wayward son in our text makes a decision to return to his Father. His first step was not a step towards a physical location but the son returned home in his heart.
 - 2. He had to get back to Father's heart! Without the positioning of his heart this story would have had a totally different outcome. In fact, without the positioning of his heart he would have been 'home' just like his older brother. YIKES!
 - 3. Love, support, encouragement...an address of the heart. We get to create that address as fathers and mothers.

III. You Must Be Prepared For The Return of the Prodigal

- A. There is no guarantee that the prodigals will choose to come home, because the wayward person has free will. **But** if they do chose to come home, we want to be ready for them. It is wrong to not be prepared knowing they will return to you broken. Two 'brokens' do not make a fix or a restoration.
- B. We must prepare by overcoming and living free from "the older son syndrome." What is the older son syndrome?
 - 1. The older son wants the younger son to pay for his sins! The older son became 'the victim' because of the way he internalized his younger brothers issues and sins.
 - 2. The older son is angry! vs. 28. Greek οργε - orge - *"upsurging impulsive anger that is oriented towards revenge or punishment."* Kittle, TDNT.
 - 3. The older son refuses to connect with his brother and thinks the father is stupid. vs 28
 - 4. The older son is filled with self-pity and accusations. vs 29
- C. As fathers and mothers and spouses of prodigals we have to prepare.
 - 1. In our wait we have to let/allow God to change us.

2. More than likely there are issues of unforgiveness that you carry or unfairness that you have experienced. Only the humble can rejoice with the Father. It is not a time to judge but to forgive and rejoice.
3. God must deal with our anger and bitterness if we are to experience true joy, love, and support when the prodigal comes home. After all the prodigal isn't the only one that needs to have some 'holy adjustments' made in him.
4. We have to prepare and if we do not, we will only make matters worse. "*Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?*" (see Luke 6:39)
- D. Control is a common trait/issue among those who are praying for prodigals to return.
 1. Anger is a by product of that control.
 2. It will not be productive to attempt to control that wayward person as they return.
- E. Co-dependency is another common dysfunction that prodigals run into when returning home. If you are a 'needy' person you will only serve to push prodigals away from you. Wayward sons and daughters or spouses do not want to be in bondage to your 'need.' Nor smothered by your dysfunction.
- F. Be prepared to disciple.
 1. We have to be ready to disciple the prodigals.
 2. They need their God given identity. I.e. the Father gave this to his son.
 3. Some will need help in overcoming their addictions.
 4. They will return with their shame, their sense of unworthiness, fear of being rejected.
 5. They will have lies to overcome: "I tried that before." "I'm are to far gone to be helped." Etc.
 6. It may mean establishing safe boundaries for you and for them.
 7. It will mean having conversations about many things. Conversations motivated and spoke in love and not anger.
- G. If we do not prepare we are sure to make a mess out of what God is doing.
 1. We are praying for all of these prodigals to return when the delay might be that we are not ready for them to come home...Lord Change ME!

Conclusion:

- "A 'Father' MUST be the stronger one who endures with peace and patience. They must be kind and thoughtful to their prodigal, and not rude or self-seeking, or keeping account of wrongs endured. The 'Father' must bear all things (regardless of what comes) and endure all things without weakening in the hopes of leading their prodigal back to the Lord, and that is ultimately what I believe a 'Father, mother, spouse' is called to do." Unknown.
- We are to love the prodigal as Christ loved the Church and give himself for her.