

9.8.23 pm

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Preacher: Richard Killer

[0:00] Good evening. Good evening. Very warm welcome to the service this evening.! The wind blows and we're gone, as though we've never been here.

But the love of the Lord remains forever with those who fear. His salvation extends to the children's children of those who are faithful to his covenant, of those who obey his commandments.

The Lord has made the heavens his throne. From there he rules over everything. Praise the Lord.

Everything he has created, everything in all his kingdom. Let all that I am praise the Lord.

And it's a wonderful psalm that just focuses our minds on the Lord and on praise. Probably that's what we all need to do this evening. We are perhaps, our minds on other things are distracted, maybe overwhelmed with guilt for some reason or negative thoughts or just busy minds.

And this psalm calls us to stir ourselves up, to sing praise to the one who freely forgives and restores. Calvin's going to come and lead us in prayer and going.

[illegible]

We'll continue the time of worship and sing in English this time from the whole Psalm 103.

And it's a Sing Psalms version of Psalm 103, standing to sing. Psalm 103.

Psalm 103. The Lord gives you all your sins. And He gives you sin and some of His death. Your life He wrestles from the grave. And grant you with His tenderness. And grant you with His tenderness.

[4:28] He satisfies your deep desires. From His unending source of will.

So that just like the eagle's friend. Your beautiful baby lives to meet you. The God is a home for righteousness.

The Lord is merciful and kind.

His mighty teacher, Israel's sons. The Lord is merciful and kind.

To anger, soul, and full of grace. He will not constantly be renewed. All in His anger hide His face.

[5:33] He does not punish our disease. Forgive our sins and just report. Have it in love as I am to end.

Towards all those who fear the Lord. Towards all those who fear the Lord. As God and Jesus is from the rest.

So the Father's love has borne away. Our many sins and trespasses. And all the guilt that's all I have to say.

Just as the Father loves to child. So God will so soon feel His pain. For He remembers we are dust. And well He knows our people frame. And well He knows our people frame. Each human life is like the grass.

[6:47] And like a man or a flower it grows. His gifts will never be recalled. Once over that the tempest slows.

A devil does sing His songs up. For those who fear Him under cheek. For those who fear His covenant.

And here will be His peace, He says He. And here will be His peace, He says He. God's kingly rule is over all.

In heaven He has set His throne. For human angels raise the Lord. So what by goodness will it's done.

O praise of the God you heavenly host. It's strength to bear for His word. Praise God His word throughout His realm.

[7:57] And you my soul obeys the Lord. And you my soul obeys the Lord.

And we're going to read from God's word from Luke.

Luke chapter 15. So if you could turn there with me, probably a good three quarters of the way through the Bible, Luke chapter 15, and we'll read the whole chapter.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to here. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them.

So if you told them this parable, What man have you having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

[9:07] And when he's found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.

Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Or, what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she's found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I found the coin that I had lost. Just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

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.

[10:23] 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 rise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned in heaven and before you.

I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. And he rose 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.

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.

For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. And they began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

[11:47] And he called one of his servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.

But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. But he answered his father, Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.

But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him. And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found. Amen.

And may God bless that reading to us. We'll sing once more, this time from Mission Praise 560. Praise my soul, the King of heaven.

[12:59] To his feet thy tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven. Who like thee his praise should sing? And then verse 3. Father like, he tends and spares us.

Well, our feeble frame he knows. In his hands he gently bears us. Rescues us from all our foes. Praise him. Praise him. We'll stand and sing this to God's praise.

Amen. Praise my soul, the King of heaven. Praise my soul, the King of heaven.

To his feet thy dead he's reign. Ransomed, risen, risen, risen, risen, risen. Praise the everlasting name.

Praise him for his grace and favor. To our fathers in distress.

[14:21] Praise him, risen, risen, risen, risen. Glory and save his faithfulness. Praise him, risen, risen, risen, risen.

Praise him, risen, risen. Praise him, risen, risen. Glory and save his faithfulness. On earth like, he turns and spares us.

Where our name of faith he knows. In his hands he gently bears us.

He rescues us from all our foes. Prison, prison, prison, prison, prison. While he asks his mercy for. Angels, angels, shall we? Angels, shall we? Angels, shall we? To our Lord. In the golden face to face.

[15:30] Sun and grunt, by dawn, before him. Dweller's all in time and seas. Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him.

Praise him, praise him. Praise him, bless him. God of peace. Praise him, praise him. Praise him, praise him.

If you could have that passage open for you, that would be great. So that's Luke chapter 15. But before we go there, let us just have a word of prayer.

Let us pray. Let's pray. Loving Heavenly Father, as we come here together tonight, we are mindful that there are those of our congregation who are struggling at the moment.

Lord, we are mindful that there are those who have suffered very recent bereavements and will be grieving. And we particularly want to pray for Agnes tonight.

[16:42] Lord, would you put your arms around her as she mourns the loss of her husband, Clint. We pray for her this week that you would uphold her, give her strength.

Father, we pray for others who, perhaps when something like this happens, it brings back memories and triggers thoughts of other loved ones that we've lost.

And Lord, even many, many years on, these things can be still very war and painful. So Lord, for all who are struggling with thoughts of these kinds, Lord, we ask that you would minister to them at this time.

And Lord, for those who are listening online and are not able to be out, and those who perhaps are struggling with infirmity, whether it's worrying about results or not sure what the treatment will be, or just concerned about things, or whether they're struggling with things that are well known by others or quite secretly and privately, whether it's physical or mental, all of these things can weigh us down and be a burden to us.

And we lift them all before you, Lord, and ask that you would put your hand of healing as the Great Physician on us. Lord, we pray for those in our midst who have yet to put their faith and trust in you.

[18:10] Lord, we long to see them come into the Kingdom. Lord, we long to see them come to know you as their Lord and Saviour.

And we just continue to lift them up before you, trusting, Lord, that you would save them. And Lord, perhaps there's some folk here who maybe in the past have made a confession of faith, but they've drifted away and they're wonderful to speak.

Well, maybe there are some folk here who are going through a period where they feel far from you and their relationship with you is cold and distant.

Lord, would you speak to each one, Lord, in that predicament. Lord, as we especially look at your word this evening, it speaks very strongly on this matter.

And Lord, we long to learn how we can restore our relationship with you and how we can encourage those around us who are struggling too. So, Lord, perhaps we've heard this parable many, many times and it's easy for us to think that we know all there is to know about it and to be arrogant in that way.

[19:25] But forgive us for being like that. And help each one of us to approach it tonight with fresh eyes, with open hearts, willing to hear what you have to say to us.

So we commit this time to you for your blessing now. In Jesus' name. Amen. In the 13th century, a very nasty and cruel experiment was carried out by Roman Emperor Frederick.

Apparently he wanted to know what man's original language was. Was it Hebrew? Was it Greek? Was it Latin? What's their original language?

So he decided to completely isolate a few newborn babies from the sound of the human voice. He reasoned that they would eventually end up speaking some kind of language.

So would that language be perhaps Greek? Perhaps it would be Latin? So he obtained wet nurses who were sworn to absolute silence.

[20:36] Minimal contact. Only what was necessary to keep these little babies alive. And though it was extremely hard for these wet nurses, they abided by the rule.

And those infants never heard a word. Not a sound from a human voice. No loving embrace when they were feeling afraid. And do you know what happened?

Did those babies grow up speaking Latin? Or Greek? Well, no, of course not. Actually, within several months, they were sadly all dead from neglect. And what this failed experiment and very tragic story goes to show is that we can only live in relationships.

We need relationships to live. And we all know that, don't we? When a relationship breaks up, it really tears us apart. The longer we're Christians, the more we realise that the Christian life is all about relationship too.

Relationship with God. Relationship with one another. The Bible is full of relationships. And this parable is no exception.

[21:46] This parable is all about experiencing a relationship of such love, intense generosity, that it dramatically changes lives.

In fact, it's about experiencing a relationship that can turn any life around. Any life. Which is maybe why this is the, I believe, the most famous short story in the world.

And probably the most preached sermon. So, it's very easy for us to switch off. And as I was praying earlier, we need to pray that we would approach this with fresh eyes.

So what we have here is one of Jesus' parables. One of the nicest ways I've heard a parable describe is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

An earthly story with a heavenly meaning. So as we begin to unpack this earthly story, hopefully we'll begin to see what the meaning behind it is. The heavenly meaning.

[22 : 46] And if you have that passage open, you'll soon realise that there are three main characters in this parable. You've got the father. And the father is like God.

And then there's two other characters, aren't there? There's the younger son and the older son. Who do they represent? Were they like the people who are listening to this parable?

And you'll find that in verse 1 and 2 of the passage. Tax collectors and sinners. Pharisees and scribes. So the younger son, he's like the tax collector and sinners.

Older son, he's like the Pharisees and scribes or the teachers of the law. So they're the ones that were listening originally, but this evening we're the ones that are actually listening to this.

So where do we fit into this story? Are we like the elder son? Or are we like the younger son? Sometimes both, maybe. So this evening we're going to analyse how these two children relate to their father.

[23 : 55] Firstly, the younger son and then the older son. And we're going to find three things about both sons. Firstly, that they have very similar situations. Secondly, they have very different responses.

And thirdly, very different outcomes. And hopefully we'll discover some wonderful things about God's father heart. I would request that, if you possibly can, you can take off your 21st century glasses, so to speak, and put on the glasses of a first century Jew.

We want to see this story from their perspective as they would have seen it. So when Jesus told them this story, what would have struck them? What would have been particularly poignant? about this very scandalous story. So let's start with the younger son. Verse 12. We read, Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.

Well, quite literally, as it says in the AV, Father, give me my inheritance. Now, in the West, I think we often take this verse for granted.

[25 : 04] But your average sort of first century Jew would have gasped in astonishment to hear this. Why? Well, let's replay the dialogue a bit, shall we? So you have the younger son saying, Dad, give me my inheritance.

And the father saying, but son, it'll be yours when you die. Yeah, dad, that's the point. I wish you were dead. I want your money, I want your money, but I don't want you.

That was basically the gist of what was being said. And at that time, to ask your father for his inheritance was the highest insult possible. It was unthinkable because it brought such shame on your family.

You can imagine that story would be on people's lips for generations in the village. Do you hear about what his son did to him? Disgraceful. And in fact, there is a historic record from around this time of this exact thing happening to a Jewish family.

The son asked his father for his inheritance. What do you think the father's response was? Well, the father didn't have an opportunity to respond.

[26 : 20] History tells us the shock of it killed him on the spot. That's how unthinkable it was for him to do that. In fact, I think it would have been kinder if he'd just killed his father outright to save him the shame and the hurt.

But let's not forget that our sin and our rebellion is deeply hurtful to a pure and holy God too. So, here in verse 12, the younger son tells his father he would rather he was dead.

He effectively says, I don't want to be your son anymore. I don't want to be part of this family. He turns his back on his father and he walks away. And that relationship is completely broken.

It's destroyed. So that's the first scandal, I think, in this parable. But another scandal that would have stunned the community is the fact that the father lets him have the inheritance at all.

Why did he do that? But then, remember, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. And this tells us something of God, doesn't it?

[27 : 29] And it mirrors Genesis 3, where God, even though it must have pained him, gives Adam the freedom to discover that sin has consequences. Jesus. So then we're told the prodigal goes off to a far-off country.

He indulges in wild living and self-gratification. And verse 30 implies that actually he ends up squandering his inheritance on a life of vice. then his world falls apart.

And he ends up in what must be the ultimate gutter for a Jew, feeding pigs and so hungry that he's even willing to eat their swill. Are you or is someone you love, perhaps a neighbour, a friend, a spouse, in a far-off place right now?

Have you or someone near to you decided to turn your back on God and to take just to go alone? Perhaps convince that if by seeking pleasure you will get happiness.

Well, look at the passage in verse 17 and turning point for the younger son is right there and I think this is a key verse. When he came to himself.

[28:48] When he came to himself. In other words, when he came to his senses. I think what we're seeing in verse 17 is what we call repentance. Because it's as though the younger son suddenly realises what he put his father through and he's genuinely sorry for the mess he's got into and his desire changes from wanting to follow his own very selfish path and said he starts to long for home.

You see, home isn't a building, is it? Home is a relationship. It's a place where I belong and I'm accepted with no strings attached. We all have a place like that, I hope.

Somewhere where it doesn't matter if you're good looking or clever or rich. You just accept it as you are. And the younger son comes to a point of turning around, realising it's not just his father's three he wants.

forgiveness. He needs his forgiveness. He needs to go home. So look at verse 18 and 19. You see him rehearsing what he's going to say to his father. He realises he's not worthy of his father's love. After all, he's basically cut himself off from his family. At that point, he demanded his inheritance, that was it. It was curtains for his relationship. But he's going to go and beg his father's forgiveness because he has wronged him and perhaps, just maybe, he will accept him as a servant.

[30:21] So he sets off home. And on that long journey home, he must have wondered how he would be received. Would his father remember who he was even?

Perhaps he had unfriended him and moved on. To get over that pain now chosen to forget, to blank him out of his mind. Hudson Taylor was a missionary in the 19th century.

And I'm going to very shamelessly make a plug here because Hudson, this is a strange link, but Hudson Taylor founded a mission called China Inland Mission which became OMF.

And OMF were coming to this very church in two weeks then. So we're having our very own mission conference here. Invite you all to come here from OMF and from InterServe.

And they're going to be talking about what opportunities are available to go out on the mission field for any age. So there's no excuses. Back to this.

[31:28] Hudson Taylor anyway, he once wrote, he said, I've always known God wouldn't forget me. But now that I have children of my own, I know that God can't forget me.

I've always known God wouldn't forget me, but now that I have children of my own, I know he can't forget me. And I think that's what we see here in these wonderful verses starting in verse 20. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him.

What we have in this parable is not a father who is forgotten, but a father who cannot forget. He is pining for his son, scanning the horizon, looking for him, longing to see his face again.

Spurgeon, who was also from the 19th century, a famous preacher, said, the father saw his son. There's a great deal in that word saw.

He saw who it was, saw where he'd come from, saw the swinehead's dress, saw the filth upon his hands and feet, saw his rags, saw his penitent look, saw what he had been, saw what he was, and saw what he was to me.

[32:39] His father saw him. God has a way of seeing men and women that you and I cannot understand. He sees right through us at a glance, as if we were made of glass.

He sees all our past, present, and future. God sees us. Each one of us, God sees us. And in the parable, when the father saw the distant figure of his son coming over the horizon, did he have cold eyes, as he thought the disgrace his family had been through?

Did he clench his fists in fury at what his son had done? God was 20. He tells us he had compassion. In fact, the word used here is a strong word which means he felt such pity that his stomach moved inside of him.

I think that kind of thing is echoed throughout scripture, isn't it? You see it in Lamentations chapter 3 where it says the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

His mercies never come to an end. Our God is a compassionate God and always will be.

[33:54] And even when believers and I know this for myself, we can be so slow to learn, can't we? Even when we mess up again and again and again his mercies never fail, never ever come to an end.

I don't know about you, but that's a huge relief to me. I think what happens next would have caused gasps as well from the first century Jewish audience.

Verse 20 tells us that he ran to his son. He ran. Just out of interest, hands up if you've ever seen the late queen run.

Have you ever seen her out for a job? Of course you haven't. It's just unheard of, isn't it? And it's no different here. In that culture for a respectable man to run, unheard of.

An old Bible college professor once told me that he used to take tours of Israel. He used to get church groups from Northern Ireland who went over to Israel and he would take that tour.

[35:01] And one morning they arrived at a very famous location. The group got out of the coach, walked to this famous site of interest and as they were getting nearby he suddenly remembered, oh, I've left my notes in the coach.

So he told his wife, look I'm going to pop back quickly and grab the notes, I don't want to miss anything. So he started trotting down the hill, as much as he could run I guess, to try and get these notes quickly.

Within seconds he was surrounded by an arm of police. What had he done? What was so suspicious? This old man running down the hill, well, it was simply that, he was running.

He was a respectable man running down the hill. Totally unheard of. But in this parable the father ignores the fact that the neighbours would stare.

He doesn't care. He ignores the fact that it's not done for someone of his status. All he cares about is that son who's coming out of the horizon and he hitches up his robes and legs it down the path.

[36:05] This is our God. A God who pines after us and longs to be in relationship with us. God willing to endure scorn and ridicule for us.

All we have to do is come home in repentance. And our God, the God of all creation, majestic, mighty, all powerful God, sees us on the horizon and runs towards us.

This is our God. This is the God we're here to worship this evening. And then going back to the passage, the Father not only runs towards him, but when he gets there, he throws his arms around this filthy, stinking son and kisses him.

Apparently, in the original language, the word kiss is present continuous, which means he kissed him on the cheek over and over again, repeatedly. We matter to God.

You matter to God. And I notice as well that there's a difference here between what the son intended to confess in verse 18 and actually what he managed to blurt out in verse 21.

[37:22] He doesn't manage to say it all. And it doesn't really matter, does it? The Father knows why he's there. The Father knows he's repentant and has come home. And he just wants to welcome him back in and shower him with blessings.

The question I have this evening is do you need to experience God's welcoming embrace? Perhaps lately you've drifted and your relationship is not right with him.

And perhaps you've come to your senses and realised that you need to do something about it. That you need to restore that relationship with the God who made you. Do you need to repent and come home?

Or maybe it's time to repent and trust for the first time. Maybe today, tonight, is the time for that.

You know, the most common name for this story or parable is the parable of the prodigal son.

In other words, the son who squanders everything. Sometimes, in some versions of the Bible, at the top of the head of it, you see it called the lost son.

[38:37] And I think that's probably more in keeping with the two parables we read earlier. You know, the lost sheep and the lost queen. I think you could probably go a step further and actually call this the parable of the lost sons.

Plural. Because if we look very closely we begin to realise it isn't just the younger son who's lost here. Let's briefly take a look at this elder son.

Although there's a lot more said about the younger son, the plight of the elder son is also documented. And Jesus seems to be showing that these grumbling Pharisees in verse two, we don't forget, are represented by the elder son, that their situation is no different to the tax-partum sinner.

in other words, the older son is no different from the younger son. I don't know about you, but if I was the younger son, I'd be extremely glad it wasn't the older son who welcomed me home. Look at his reaction when he discovers the celebration part of verse 28. He is raging, he's furious. not only is his waster of a brother being treated with such honour, but he's being allowed to wear the ring and the robe and the sandals.

[39 : 55] They're right for his inheritance. What's going on? Nothing to do with his brother. In verse 30, he won't even acknowledge him as a brother. He calls him this son of yours and refuses to go into the party.

Again, another reaction that would have caused a gasp of astonishment. For a son to publicly refuse to enter his father's party was an incredible offence.

And in fact, for the ancient Jews, for a son to be so publicly rebellious was a sin that could be punishable by death. I think another thing that would have been obvious to anyone in that culture at that time was that surely the elders son should have had some responsibility here.

Shouldn't he have gone out and looked for the younger son? Shouldn't he have tried to restore that family harmony? But there's no mention of that, is there? Which is in stark, stark contrast to what we see of God in the two previous parables we read earlier.

I think instead what we find is an elder son who is in theory at home, but is actually as far away from the father as the younger son is. Although he's still living under the same roof, he's not truly at home.

[41 : 15] He's lost. He's out of relationship with his father. So all of this massive long background, I'm very sorry it took so long, but it leads to this conclusion.

Both of these sons are in the same predicament in similar situations. And that was the first point. The other two points are going to go really fast. But that was a long build-up. But both of these sons are in the same predicament.

They're both in a broken relationship with their father. They're both lost. They both need to go home. But where we see the younger son in verse 17 coming to his senses, there's no sign of that as they're with the older son.

So although they're in the same situation, as you'll see there, their responses are very different. They diverge at this point.

In verse 28, despite him shamefully disgracing his father in public and sinning against him, the father still very graciously comes out and pleads with the son.

[42 : 21] But what stops that son from repenting, being sorry about his sin? What stops him? Verse 29 shows us the thing that stopped the elder son from seeking forgiveness.

The thing that makes his response different from the younger son is actually his own goodness. His own goodness. That is why Jesus was comparing this son to the Pharisees.

You see, the Pharisees, they were a hyper-religious group of people. Jews that had started with good intentions. They wanted to follow God's law, so let's make a law to make sure that we keep that law, and then let's make another law to make sure we keep that law.

And it just snowballed into a system of 613 laws, 365 negative commands, 248 positive ones.

And by the time of Christ, it produced a heartless, cold, arrogant brand of righteousness. This was a group that really relied on their own goodness, instead of God's goodness.

[43 : 32] They believed to get to heaven, they had to be very self-righteous. But Jesus says to them, you think again. Think again. We all know people like that, don't we?

I've just made someone up. Rosemary. Rosemary Poppins. If you've seen the film Mary Poppins, you'll appreciate that in the film she refers to herself as being practican't perfect in every way.

Rosemary Poppins is no different. At least you want people to think so. She's a morally upright citizen. She's fanatical about doing church work, looks down on people that don't do it.

She's often at church, but not because she has a relationship with God. In fact, when people talk about her, she gets a little bit perplexed. No, Rosemary Poppins goes to church because it's the right thing to do.

Often Rosemary wishes that people were like her. Society would be so much better if people were like me, she thinks. And of course she believes she's going to go to heaven because good people like her who live good lives, they go to heaven.

[44 : 45] Perhaps that is like you or a close family friend or someone you can think of when I mention someone like that. Perhaps this speaking of a relationship with God actually leaves you

somewhat puzzled this evening.

And you realise, hold on a minute, I'm missing out on something here. God's goodness to save you. So far we've seen that there are two brothers who share the same situation. They were both lost, away from home, out of relationship with the father. Then their paths diverged.

They have different responses. although both are equally welcome and loved by the father, it's only the younger son that seems to come to his senses. And the result, well, for that younger son, he goes on further and enjoys the father's blessing.

But that elder son, tragically, he misses out. And it's desperately sad. And that's our third and final point. There are very different outcomes.

[46:01] I suppose the question to close this sermon is, do you find yourself in the position of the younger or the elder son right now? Maybe it's time you returned home in repentance to your heavenly father because he is desperate to welcome you home with open arms.

After all, we don't have a stingy brother like the elder brother, a brother who's unwilling to share his inheritance even though by right he would have had two-thirds of it. Romans 8 tells us that if you return home, you're all the brother of Jesus himself, one who wouldn't be content to leave you in that far-off country, the only one who has truly earned the right to wear the robe and the ring because his life was perfect.

But at the end of his life, he was stripped of that robe so that we could be clothed from him instead. For those of us who are listening online or here in person who have never had a relationship with God, let's be clear.

Jesus' death on the cross is the only thing that blocks you from hell. He's paid the cost and opened up the way for us to go to him, but it's up to us.

We have a choice. We do have a choice. So we can, if we won't, choose to trample over that cross and pay for our sins ourselves. We can choose, yeah, I'm going to die the death, I deserve to die, I'm going to suffer the consequences, I'm going to go and be in eternal separation from God in hell.

[47:39] It's harsh, but it's true, and ultimately it's our choice. maybe tonight is when you choose that the life we don't deserve, that free gift being offered to us, is the life you want.

You make that choice to spend eternity with God, and we can make that choice right here, right now. Which way are you going to go? There is no middle ground here, by the way.

As David was saying, there's no amber light, he said that this morning. you're either in or you're out. But this message is actually mainly for those of us who, in the words of that much loved him, are prone to wonder.

I can certainly see that in my life at times. I think we're all aware that we can be guilty of being like the older brother and the younger brother sometimes, can't we?

And it affects our relationship with our Heavenly Father. We're all guilty of being either verging off one way and thinking very worldly thoughts and living life, seeking pleasure, or we verge off the other way and we start to think that actually I'm quite a righteous person, what I do is why I'm saved.

[48:58] We rely on our own goodness. It's very easy, it's a very fine line and it's a balancing act. But this parable reminds us that all is not lost. We just need to come back in repentance.

repentance and those arms will welcome us back. Let's pray, shall we? Father God, thank you so much for the love that you have for us, this intense, perfect, pure love that can counteract the bile and filth of sin.

thank you that Jesus' death made it possible for us to come to you, to be adopted into your family. But Lord, we realise that we so easily get enticed by the world around us, it's so easy to watch social media and different scrolling things that just pull us away from you.

Please forgive us, Lord. Lord, there are times when we rely on our own goodness instead of realising it's all about you and it's all down to you.

And we want to ask forgiveness for that Lord as well. Please help us to trust alone in what Christ has done for us on the cross. Lord, we see something of that younger brother and elder brother in all of our lives and we just want to ask for your forgiveness.

[50:27] we pray this in Jesus' name. We're going to close with a song that draws very heavily on Psalm 103.

It's a song we all know very well, His mercy is more. And we will stand to sing this as we close. God's love could we remember the wrongs we have done God rest for lovingly thanks for their son

God is what she with that daughter not sure Our sins they are many years that she is more than it is
may may may may Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.