

*Gloriously Good News For The Rule-Keepers And The Rule-Breakers,  
The Religious And The Irreligious, The Best Of The Best And The Worst Of The Worst*

# THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS



VERSE-BY-VERSE READINGS FOR YOUR ENCOURAGEMENT  
BASED ON THE PARABLES OF LUKE CHAPTER 15

**Jimmy D. Brown**

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## Introduction: The Gospel Isn't A Self-Help Plan

I've got some good news and some bad news.

It sounds like the beginning of a joke about something that initially leaves you feeling hopeful, but ultimately leaves you dejected.

*The good news is, the church members have finally voted to add new parking.*

*The bad news is, they are going to pave the front lawn of the parsonage where you live.*

The good news doesn't really overcome the bad news, does it? In fact, the good news isn't really good news at all, is it?

But that's not going to be the case here. The good news I'm about to share with you really is good news that really does overcome the bad news.

*The bad news is, you and I are sinners.*

*The good news is, this man receives sinners.*

And that's no joke.

Actually, it was an accusation made by the grumbling religious leaders in Luke 15:1-2...

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

Jesus responds to their statement not by denying it, but by affirming it with a very detailed explanation of why this was gloriously good news.

For the tax collectors and sinners.

For the Pharisees and the scribes.

For you and me.

For our enemies and loved ones.

Throughout the chapter, Jesus tells three related parables (fictional stories to make a main point) to show the heart of God toward sinners like us. And it will leave us full of hope if we will believe it.

## *THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS*

In this short book, I'm going to walk you through these stories one Bible verse at a time. Each reading will start with a verse, be followed by a short thought related to that verse, and will conclude with a few reflection questions to get you thinking about what it looks like to live out the verse.

My prayer is that you will find in the words of these pages and, more importantly, in the words of Jesus, some gloriously good news...

If you need to be reminded there is hope for your prodigal to come home.

If you need to be reminded there is a place for someone like you at the table with Jesus.

If you need to be reminded that you haven't gone too far to receive grace from God.

If you need to be reminded to extend forgiveness to others like God has extended to you.

If you need to be reminded to repent of your self-righteous rule-keeping.

If you need to be reminded to not grumble about what God rejoices over.

If you need to be reminded to lay aside anything that keeps you on the outside.

If you need to be reminded of the great love and joy that God invites you to come into.

If you need to be reminded to celebrate the work of God in seeking lost sons and daughters.

If you need to be reminded that when you were the one, He left the ninety-nine to find you.

Listen...

The gospel is not a self-help plan; it is a rescue plan. God does not ask us to fix ourselves in five simple steps, but rather to trust in the one stunning step He took in sending Jesus to fix all that is broken in us.

All of us have gone astray and none of us can find our way to God on our own. In fact, apart from His work in our lives, we aren't even trying to and we don't even want to.

We are lost. Hopelessly lost. Hopelessly lost and in danger of eternal ruin. But a hero is sent to save the day by saving us.

He's like the woman who searches for her lost coin.

*THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS*

He's like the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep.

He's like the father who runs toward the lost son.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

And God rejoices when we are found.

So, I hope you'll read every word in this book.

Because I've got some really, really good news to share...

## THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS

1.

### THERE IS HOPE FOR US ALL

*Now the tax collectors and sinners were  
all drawing near to hear him. – Luke 15:1 (ESV Bible)*

None of us are too far away from God that we cannot draw near to Jesus. That's exactly who He came to help. People who are sick in sin and know they need a physician to heal their souls. When we go to Him with open hearts, we find Jesus waiting with open arms. Rejoice! No matter who we are. No matter what we have done. No matter how big our need. Grace awaits all who turn to Jesus in saving faith. The rule-keepers and the rule-breakers. The religious and the irreligious. The best of the best and the worst of the worst. Everyone needs Jesus. The gloriously good news of the gospel is that there is hope for us all.

#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

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4. *What do you think God wants you to believe, feel, say or do as a response today?*

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## THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS

2.

### THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS

*And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying,  
"This man receives sinners and eats with them." – Luke 15:2*

The influential religious leaders thought Jesus was treating sin lightly by associating with these people. But this shows He treated it seriously because He knew being with them is how He would reach them. He came to seek and save the lost. "Receives" isn't passive; it means "to eagerly await or expect and look for." Jesus watched for them and waited for them because He wanted them. To join Him at the table. To join Him in the kingdom. What was Jesus doing with these people? Welcoming them. Loving them. Saving them. Jesus doesn't become unclean by eating with sinners; sinners become clean by eating with Jesus.

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3.

REVEALING THE HEART OF A SEEKING AND SAVING GOD

*So he told them this parable. – Luke 15:3*

As a response to grumbling about His actions, Jesus told a parable. It was directed at the religious leaders. It was heard by the entire crowd. It was meant for us all. What Jesus was about to make known is that God seeks lost sinners and loves seeing them found. In fact, He has entered this world and is present at this table and is speaking through this parable so that those in this crowd might know they will be rejoiced over in heaven when they repent. He will find what is missing. He will find what belongs to Him. He will find His sons and daughters. This parable reveals the heart of a God who seeks and saves the lost.

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4.

WHEN WE WERE THE ONE THAT WAS LOST

*“What man of 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?” – Luke 15:4*

While leaving the ninety-nine sheep safe, a caring shepherd will go after the one lost sheep that is in danger. It seems Jesus means for us to understand God’s love for each individual sinner. He cares about us. He knows when we are lost. He wants us to be found. The God Who rules over everything happening in the universe gives special attention to one person at a time. This is why Jesus eats with sinners. He is on a mission to rescue those in danger of entering into eternal condemnation and missing out on eternal life. Let us rejoice! For He came after us and found us when we were the one that was lost.

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## THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS

5.

### GOD DOESN'T REGRET SAVING US

*And when he has found it, he lays  
it on his shoulders, rejoicing. – Luke 15:5*

We have all gone astray. Every human, by nature and choice, has turned away from God to sinfully do whatever sounds good, looks good and feels good to us. And it destroys everything we touch. This is the essence of lostness – people going their own way. Rebelling against God. Wrecking our lives. Heading for eternal damnation. When God rescues us from the horror of sin, it is right and fitting for Him to rejoice at what He has done. Weak and weary from our sin, He picks us up in love, puts us on His shoulders of grace and carries us home to be with Him. God doesn't regret saving us; God rejoices over it.

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6.

THE JOY OF BEING FOUND

*And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them,  
'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'* – Luke 15:6

The Pharisees and scribes grumbled when they should have rejoiced. They saw Jesus eating with sinners, but didn't see Him as the Good Shepherd bringing lost sheep safely home. One of the evidences of a hard heart is desiring mercy for oneself while demanding judgment for others. But we are invited into both the joy of being found by Jesus and the joy of other people being found by Jesus. He calls to us... Come follow me. Tell others about me. Rejoice with me. We should never criticize what Jesus celebrates. He gave His life for us. He gave His life for them. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for all of His sheep.

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7.

WHEN SOMEONE TRUSTS HIS SON

*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. – Luke 15:7*

Whether the ninety-nine are people who are safe in the kingdom because they have already repented and been made righteous by Jesus, or this is referring to the self-righteous who only think they need no repentance, the point is the same. There is great joy in heaven when a sinner repents and believes. The Law shows us how desperately lost we are. The gospel shows us how deeply loved we are. And it is a miraculous work of grace when someone turns from sin and turns to Jesus in saving faith. Heaven rightly rejoices every single time every single sinner is found. When someone trusts His Son, God is always glad.

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8.

UNTIL WE WERE FOUND BY HIM

*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? – Luke 15:8*

What is Jesus doing when He eats with sinners? What is God's attitude toward those who are lost? It is like this woman searching diligently for something of great value to her. God sent Jesus, the Light of the World, into the darkness of the world to find lost coins like you and me. While this shows our great value to God, it shows even more the infinitely great value of God. He is loving. He is compassionate. He is gracious. When we were in the dark and the dirt, He took the initiative to come for us to forgive us. Glory to God! He is worthy of all praise! We didn't even know we were lost until we were found by Him.

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9.

NO ONE IS EVER SO LOST

*And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying,  
'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'* – Luke 15:9

By now as Jesus was telling this parable, did the listening sinners and tax collectors start to have hope? Did they realize they were the lost coin, and Jesus had come to find them? Did they sense a switch from the usual judgment they felt from others to the joy Jesus had for their return? This is what it feels like to be included. This is what it feels like to be wanted. This is what it feels like to be loved. Yes, repentance and faith are required from the sinner. But grace and mercy are offered by the Savior. Why call people together to say, "Rejoice with me"? Because no one is ever so lost that they cannot be found by Jesus.

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10.

BEING RESTORED TO GOD

*Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God  
over one sinner who repents. – Luke 15:10*

Rejoicing rightly takes place over every single lost person who says of their sin, "I did it. I regret doing it. Help me not do it again. Lead me to something better in you." When someone weeps with godly sorrow over their sin and longs for Jesus to set them free, there should be joy. When someone turns from a terrible path of destruction to follow Jesus in faith, there should be joy. When someone sees the ugliness of their sin and leaves it behind for the beauty of Jesus and a future with Him, there should be joy. There is much to celebrate when a sinner repents! Being restored to God is always a miraculous, joyous thing.

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11.

IF THEY WANT TO BE SAVED, THEY CAN BE

*And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. – Luke 15:11*

While this parable shares that same main theme as the first two from the chapter (that God rejoices when sinners repent and receive forgiveness), it differs in that it stresses the actions and reactions of the lost. The sheep and the coin were passive and yet automatically saved; the two sons are not. This parable will elaborate on devastating lostness, genuine repentance and lavish grace. There was a man who had two sons. One will stray and one will stay, but the father's grace and love will be extended to both the egregious rule-breaker and the callous rule-keeper. If they want to be saved, they can be.

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12.

FINDING OUR WAY TO HIM

*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. – Luke 15:12*

The younger son makes a shocking and insulting request that is like saying, "You're dead to me." He doesn't want to live in dependence upon his father. He doesn't want to submit to the authority of his father. He doesn't want any kind of loving relationship with his father. What the son wants is to live as if his father isn't there at all. This act reveals what a sinful heart looks like: it wants nothing to do with God. Here, the father grants the request and lets him leave. Likewise, God often allows us to go our own way and see where that takes us. But He does so that we might find sin to be futile and find our way to Him.

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13.

WHEN WE LOVE HIM MOST

*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. – Luke 15:13*

Before he left for the far country, his heart was already far from his father. What a picture of sin this is: treasuring anything or anyone more than God. Where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also. In fact, all the sins of all the people in all the world are the result of sinful love. Loving what it is wrong to love. Failing to love what should be loved. Loving too much what should be loved less. Loving too little what should be loved more. The only real remedy for squandering our lives away in sinful love is to love God with all of our hearts, souls and minds. We will love other things best when we love Him most.

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14.

THE JOY OF RETURNING HOME

*And when he had spent everything, a severe famine  
arose in that country, and he began to be in need. – Luke 15:14*

As this parable told by Jesus reached the point where the consequences of the younger son's actions began to materialize, what was on the minds of those in the listening crowd? Perhaps the religious leaders were thinking, "This is what happens when you do bad things. This is why you should never leave home and head to the far country. It won't end well." Maybe the sinners and tax collectors were painfully reliving their own stories as they waited for Jesus to warn the crowd of the dangers of going your own way. But this is no cautionary tale. It is not about joy that runs out; it is about the joy of returning home.

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15.

THERE IS TIME TO TRADE BACK

*So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country,  
who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. – Luke 15:15*

Sin will ultimately force you to do things you never imagined yourself doing. Instead of enjoying the blessings of sonship, this young man was in slavery. His supposed freedom was taken from him. And, in desperation, he hired himself out to feed ceremonially unclean animals. This is the inevitable result of choosing sin over God. As it has been said, sin takes you farther than you planned to go, keeps you longer than you planned to stay and costs you more than you planned to pay. Trading what God offers for what sin offers is always ruinous. The good news is, while you are still breathing, there is time to trade back.

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16.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE LIKE THAT

*And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate,  
and no one gave him anything. – Luke 15:16*

The promises of sin seem too good to be true, and that's because they are. A license to do whatever you want feels like freedom in the beginning, but ends in utter misery. Worldly pleasures fade. Worldly friends desert. Worldly ways ruin. Whether that happens in this life, the one to come, or both, it will happen. But what God offers us in Jesus is infinitely better than what sin offers, both now and forever. It is true. It is pleasurable. It is lasting. It is regret-free. There is good news for those fed up with sin's empty promises... You don't have to live like that. For God gives us everything needed to satisfy the longings of our souls.

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17.

COMING TO OURSELVES, COMING TO OUR FATHER

*“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!’ – Luke 15:17*

The younger son began to see himself and his father differently than before. He knew that he had sinfully traded away the bounty of his father’s table for fleeting pleasures that never satisfy for long and always leave one hungering for more. Repentance begins with a change in how we view God and ourselves. We are poor and needy; He is rich and generous. Only when we recognize our spiritual destitution will we start to see God’s lavish salvation. The “more than enough” available with Him is better than everything else in the universe without Him. Coming to ourselves is the first step towards coming to the Father.

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18.

HIS MERCY AND GRACE ARE GREATER STILL

*I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you." – Luke 15:18*

The younger son comes to the realization that his sin offended two parties at the same time. He sinned against his father. He sinned against God. Likewise, our sin isn't limited to wronging others. For every time we sin against others, we also break the commands of God and bring dishonor to God. Our sin is ultimately, and most significantly, an offense to Him. Some people realize this; some people don't. Some people care about this; some people don't. But repentance only takes place when we take seriously how great our offense is to a holy God. When we do, we will find that His mercy and grace are greater still.

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19.

HE TREATS US LIKE BELOVED SONS AND DAUGHTERS

*"I am no longer worthy to be called your son.*

*Treat me as one of your hired servants."* – Luke 15:19

Having finally realized the foolishness and magnitude of his sin, this son confesses His unworthiness of sonship. He deserves to be cut off from his father. As he had counted the cost of repentance, he made the decision to return in humility to confess his wrongdoing and seek mercy. But while he understands his condition, he does not yet understand his father's heart. The father wants him as a son, not a servant. Likewise, we don't work for God's help; we ask for it in repentance and faith. Because Jesus makes us worthy, God doesn't treat us like hired servants. He treats us like beloved sons and daughters.

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20.

THIS STORY IS ABOUT THE FATHER

*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 15:20*

The focus of this story is often misplaced on the two sons, but this story is about the father. He watches. He sees. He loves. He runs. He embraces. The father has a warm heart for this wayward one, not a cold shoulder. This is how God is portrayed: eager to graciously and joyfully receive repentant sinners. Sin offends; grace forgives. Sin ruins; grace restores. Sin separates; grace embraces. There is no offense so big, no distance so far and no period so long that God has not covered it through the work of Jesus on the cross. Jesus is saying to the crowd then and to us now: The Father's grace is greater than all your sin.

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Be sure to praise God, trust God, obey God, testify for God, depend on God and rejoice in God today because of some truth, instruction or promise He has graciously revealed to you for your good.

21.

TO BE WITH GOD IS ALWAYS AN INFINITE UPGRADE

*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.'* – Luke 15:21

Biblical repentance changes how you think about sin and what you do about sin. First, you start to see sin differently. That it is wrong. That it is destructive. That it is ugly. That it is anti-God. Second, you start to respond to sin differently. You leave it. You avoid it. You fight it. You replace it. The young son followed through on the plan formed in his repentant heart and mind. He left the reckless living behind and went home, seemingly humbled, sorrowful and genuine in his desire to be free from sin and reconnected in some way to his father. Here is the truth: Giving up sin to be with God is always an infinite upgrade.

#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

1. *What stands out to you most from today's reading? Why?*
2. *What good news do you see from the text? How does it apply to you?*
3. *What did you learn about God (Who He is and what He does) that is praiseworthy?*
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22.

THIS SON DID NOTHING, THE SON DID EVERYTHING

*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. – Luke 15:22*

The father didn't even let him finish what he was saying, which would not have gone unnoticed to the religious leaders listening to Jesus tell this story. This son had done nothing to atone for his sin! But the father evidently saw repentance and faith. And the father vividly extended mercy and grace. The robe and the ring and the shoes were proof of his acceptance as they were for sons, not servants. This is how our heavenly Father welcomes sinners when they come home, only better. He overcame the awful reality of our condition by the glorious work of Jesus on the cross. The Son did everything to atone for our sin.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

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23.

SALVATION IS THE GREATEST OF THEM

*And bring the fattened calf and kill it,  
and let us eat and celebrate. – Luke 15:23*

He hoped to become a servant, but he was welcomed as a son. He deserved punishment, but he was wholly forgiven. He thought he would be treated coldly, but he received a celebration. Grace is always infinitely better than we hope, deserve or think it will be. Our Father lavishly, enthusiastically, graciously welcomes and restores us in such a manner. Even though we rebelled against Him. Even though we preferred the far country over Him. Even though we have nothing but our sin and shame when we come to Him. The fattened calf was reserved for very special occasions, and salvation is the greatest of them.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

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24.

GOD REJOICES WHEN ONE SINNER REPENTS

*For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'*

*And they began to celebrate. – Luke 15:24*

The lost sheep is found... celebration. The lost coin is found... celebration. The lost son is found... celebration. One thing is clear from the parables: God rejoices when one sinner repents. This is what Jesus wants the crowd to hear and this is what the crowd needs to hear. What is he doing? He has come to seek and save. The prodigal was lost and Jesus is the way. The prodigal was foolish and Jesus is the truth. The prodigal was dead and Jesus is the life. Sinners are saved when they draw near to hear the message of Jesus and He eagerly receives them. The religious leaders grumble at this, but God rejoices.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

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25.

HEAVENLY MUSIC AND DANCING AWAITS

*Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. – Luke 15:25*

The story shifts to the older brother who was dutifully at work in the field when the celebration began. On the surface, his life contrasted that of his prodigal brother. He stayed home. He earned what was given to him. He obeyed his father. But he was more like his younger sibling than he knew, for both had hearts that were cold toward their father. Rule-keepers and rule-breakers don't look the same on the outside, but they share an unregenerate heart that doesn't love God. Sin is sin. Both the moral and the immoral in the listening crowd needed to repent. Heavenly music and dancing awaited if they did.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

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26.

YOU CAN ALSO BE FOUND

*And he called one of the servants and asked  
what these things meant. – Luke 15:26*

What does it mean? The older son heard the rejoicing but didn't understand it. His confusion would quickly turn to resentment as he learned the reason for this celebration: the safe return of his wayward brother and the lavish welcome of his gracious father. He represents the hard-hearted Pharisees who grumbled at Jesus because they didn't understand what it meant that He received sinners. But what does it mean that they do not receive sinners? Like the older brother, they failed to grasp or display the loving heart of their Father. You can be lost whether you leave home or stay home. You can also be found.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

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27.

THIS IS THE STORY JESUS IS REALLY TELLING

*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.'* – Luke 15:27

The father killed the fattened calf as part of his unsparing, unrestrained welcome of the returning son. What a beautiful picture of the extravagance of grace. But the gospel is even better than this story. Our heavenly Father sent Jesus into the far country to be killed so we could be welcomed. He received our punishment and removed our condemnation. He secured our reception and paid for our inheritance. We can come home safe and sound from sin and alienation and futility and hopelessness to the Father's lavish blessing because Jesus came to seek and save the lost. This is the story Jesus is really telling.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

1. *What stands out to you most from today's reading? Why?*
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28.

HE COMES OUT TO INVITE US TO COME IN

*But he was angry and refused to go in.*

*His father came out and entreated him. – Luke 15:28*

The older son evidently saw his father's acceptance of the younger son as injustice. It all seemed unfair, as if reckless living was being rewarded, when it should have been punished. His anger is like the grumbling of the religious leaders who didn't approve of Jesus forgiving and welcoming sinners into the kingdom of God. But that's the beauty of grace. We don't do anything to deserve it, and we do many things to not deserve it. Again, we see the father taking the initiative to restore. He seeks. He appeals. He offers. That's what our heavenly Father is like: He comes out to invite unworthy sinners like us to come in.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

1. *What stands out to you most from today's reading? Why?*
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29.

GOD DOESN'T OWE DEBTS ... HE PAYS THEM

*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. – Luke 15:29*

This son stayed home, but he is just as lost as his brother was in the far country. He reeks of self-righteous boasting. He recognizes his brother's sin, but not his own. He refuses to enter the joy of his father. This is a picture of someone who thinks they are good enough to earn what God will only freely give. It is a duty, not a delight. It is works-based, not faith-based. It is religion, not relationship. Like the pharisees, the older brother thinks in terms of merit and reward, not mercy and grace. Prideful people often feel like they aren't getting what they are owed. But God doesn't owe debts; He pays them for those who repent.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

1. *What stands out to you most from today's reading? Why?*
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30.

ALL HAVE SINNED AND ALL CAN BE FORGIVEN

*But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes,  
you killed the fattened calf for him!* – Luke 15:30

The older brother didn't see the wickedness of his heart, but he did see the wickedness of his sibling. That's what self-righteousness does. It fixates us on the sin of others while blinding us to our own sin. "I'm not like that." "I'd never do that." "I'll condemn that." But self-righteousness is just another form of unrighteousness. They don't look the same on the outside, but they are the same on the inside. Both rule-keepers and rule-breakers can have hearts that are far from God. We may sin differently than others, but sin is sin. What the gospel helps us see clearly is that all have sinned, and all can be forgiven.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

1. *What stands out to you most from today's reading? Why?*
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31.

THE REAL REWARD

*And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me,  
and all that is mine is yours. – Luke 15:31*

It's easy to lose sight of all that is ours when we focus on what other people are given that we aren't or what they get to do that we don't. The father tries to show his oldest son that a one-day celebration was just a tiny sliver compared to all he could experience. Jesus isn't saying that self-righteous older brothers who remain unrepentant are automatically sons with privileges. Jesus is saying to the crowd, put down your sin and come in. God's riches are available to all who are with Him. The real reward is the Father. The real reward is a relationship. The real reward is all that comes from being with Him now and forever.

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32.

THE STORY ENDS IN HOPE

*It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead,  
and is alive; he was lost, and is found. – Luke 15:32*

The grumbling religious leaders questioned the motive Jesus had for eating with sinners. This is why He did it, because this is why He came. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to bring the dead to life. This story ends in hope that the older brother will come in, that the listening religious leaders will come in, that all who have yet to repent will come in. And when someone does, it should be a joyful time for the family of God. Let us embrace who our heavenly Father embraces. Rejoicing in heaven is waiting to erupt over the next lost person who finds life in the seeking Savior. Celebration always follows salvation.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS...

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## Coming To Your Senses. Coming Inside. Coming To The Father.

On the previous pages, some gloriously good news has been shared for those who come to their senses about their sin, come to the Father in repentant faith, and come inside to experience His love and joy.

Let me briefly summarize it here...

*God loves you. God seeks you. God forgives you. God restores you. God blesses you.*

While the two sons are a part of the story Jesus told, it's not their story. This story is about the father. And, more significantly, it's about our Heavenly Father. It's about the mercy and grace He extends to unworthy sons and daughters.

Take the father out of the story.

Take his mercy and grace out of the story.

What remains? Two helpless and hopeless sons who are stuck in the misery of their lostness with no way to ever be found.

That's us without our Heavenly Father. That's us without His mercy and grace.

But the gloriously good news is that The Greatest Story Ever Told is all about the mercy and grace of our Heavenly Father sending His Son to find us and forgive us and free us and favor us forever by finishing His work on the cross.

Still, there is something we need to understand about good news in general and about the good news of the gospel in particular. It is only good news for you and me when three requirements are met...

1. *It is only good news if it is true.* Consider this... Your oncologist tells you that the cancer is in remission, and you're going to be fine, but you find out later that he was mistaken. The cancer has returned and spread. What he told you initially wasn't good news for you because it wasn't true.
2. *It is only good news if it applies to you.* Consider this... Your friend tells you about a restaurant that has free food for kids ages 10 and under every Tuesday evening. But you don't have any children. What he told you wasn't good news for you because it doesn't apply to you.

## THIS MAN RECEIVES SINNERS

3. *It is only good news if you believe it.* Consider this... Your boss tells you that you can have April 1<sup>st</sup> off. But you think he's just pranking you as an "April fools" joke, so you come in only to find that he was serious. What he told you wasn't good news for you because you didn't believe it.

Here's the thing about the gospel...

*It IS true. It DOES apply to you.*

The question is...

*Will you believe it?*

What Jesus has done to "receive sinners" into the family of God is good news whether you believe it or not. But it's only good news for YOU when you "receive" by FAITH the grace that is freely offered to you.

You have to believe it.

So... Where do you go from here? What is your next step?

Step One is to welcome Jesus into your life for Who He is: Savior, Provider, Counselor, Leader, King, Treasure. If you have never repented of your sinful life apart from Him and received the new life that comes through Him, then by faith, ask God for this right now. If you really mean it, He will give it to you.

Step Two onward is to grow in grace. Step after step, you let Jesus be Who He is ... *for you*. He is YOUR Savior. He is YOUR Provider. He is YOUR Counselor. He is YOUR Leader. He is YOUR King. He is YOUR Treasure. You seek to know Him, follow Him and enjoy Him, letting His peace, hope and joy rule in your heart as He rules your life for your good.

So, whether you're in the pigsty or on the front porch, why don't you come to your senses, come inside and come to your Heavenly Father by putting your faith in Jesus?

*God rejoices when sinners repent; Jesus receives sinners who do.*

That's the story. That's the message. That's the truth.

All for Him,

*Jimmy D. Brown*

## Connecting With Me

If you have questions about any of the enclosed material, or if you have any other questions about life with Jesus, please reach out to me by using the *Contact* form at the bottom of the page at *JimmyBrown.com* (making sure you enter your email address correctly). I will personally reply back to you, usually within 24 hours (excluding holidays or weekends).

*NOTE: There are a number of free resources available at [www.JimmyBrown.com](http://www.JimmyBrown.com), and I regularly add more to the site. Check back often for additional materials to access at no cost.*

### Other Connections

- Social media (personal page): [www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/](http://www.Facebook.com/thejimmydbrown/)
- Daily devotions: [www.FinishLineFaith.com](http://www.FinishLineFaith.com) or [www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/](http://www.Facebook.com/FinishLineFaith/)
- Travel / mission vlog (with my wife, Paula): [www.TheMissionAmerica.com](http://www.TheMissionAmerica.com)

*If this resource has been helpful to you, please reach out and let me know.  
And please pass this document on to other people who may, by the grace of God, be helped too.*