

# Luke 15:11-24

*"Abiding in Jesus"*

*December 7, 2025*

1. Well, as you can see from all the beautiful decorations around the church, this Sunday marks our move into the joys of the Christmas season
  - a. This is by far my favorite time of the year
    - i. Just think about what our neighborhood streets looked like here in Sapulpa a few weeks ago
      1. As you drive around our streets in the days leading up to Halloween, death and mourning and even the demonic is celebrated in so many front yards
        - a. We've got 15-foot tall skeletons...
        - b. Witches and ghosts flying around fake graveyards...
        - c. The worst one is right around our corner, where they have creepy baby dolls propped up in the yard, and black trash bags hanging in the trees to look like body bags
          - i. I don't know how you all feel about it, but Halloween is quickly becoming my LEAST favorite time of the year
    - ii. But I love November 1<sup>st</sup>!
      1. On November 1<sup>st</sup>, the darkness of the Halloween decoration start to come down, and the bright and cheerful Christmas decorations start to come out
        - a. Now, granted, a lot of these are getting pretty cheesy as well
        - b. But I could spend hours driving around looking at all the Christmas lights around town
          - i. As we move into November, there's a general attitude of thankfulness as we get closer to Thanksgiving
        - c. And then, now in December, the attention around the world shifts toward the birth of Jesus Christ
          - i. Yes, there are plenty of things that distract from the true meaning of Christmas
          - ii. Yes, the commercialization of Christmas is way out of hand
      2. But if we are diligent in our own lives and our own thoughts and emotions,
        - a. We can remind ourselves and one another what this time of year is all about
          - i. And of course, it is all about Jesus, isn't it
          - ii. Maybe even to put it on an even grander and majestic level, it is all about the love of God our Father
            1. For John 3:16 reminds us that God so LOVED the world, that He sent His Son INTO this world
              - a. That whoever would believe in the Son would have eternal life, and they would not perish
            - b. The birth of the Son came to be because of the LOVE of the Father
  - b. And so, it is fitting that, as we draw nearer to Christmas, we spend the next three weeks looking at this amazing parable of the Prodigal Son
    - i. And we're going to look at this Parable from three different perspectives
      1. The first perspective we'll look at is of course the perspective of the Prodigal Son
        - a. And hopefully we'll be reminded this morning of the importance of abiding in the love of Christ during this busy and over-materialistic season
      2. Next week, we'll look at this Parable from the perspective of the Older Son

- a. And hopefully we'll be reminded next Sunday of the grace and kindness we have been given by the Father
      - i. As we get closer to those family gatherings where we so often struggle to show grace and kindness to others
  - 3. And then, on December 21<sup>st</sup>, which will be our official Christmas service, we'll look at this Parable from the perspective of the Father
    - a. And Lord willing, we, and all of the guests that the Lord might bring our way, will be reminded of the love our Father in Heaven, displayed in the greatest gift of all...
      - i. The Son who would be sacrificed on our behalf
  - ii. So that is our plan for the next three weeks
    - 1. As we all know, Christmas is a fantastic time to invite people to church
      - a. So look for those opportunities to do so
      - b. We've got the extra blessing this year of the Hymn Sing on the Saturday night before our Christmas service,
        - i. So invite people to that as well
          - 1. Feel free to grab some of the invite cards for that as you leave today
      - c. And, as Paul wrote in Colossians 4, verse 5,
        - i. Let's walk in wisdom toward outsiders, and make the best use of this time of the year!
  - iii. Alright, let's now turn to the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and we'll read verses 11-24 this morning...

## 2. Luke 15:11-24

- a. *<sup>11</sup>And [Jesus] said, "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>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! <sup>18</sup>I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>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.' <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate."*

- i. Well, as I mentioned a moment ago, we'll spend this morning looking at this Parable from the perspective of the Prodigal Son

### 1. And we'll do this in three parts

- a. The first will be the Deceitfulness of our Worldly Desires
- b. The second will be the Death of our Self-Centeredness
- c. And the third will be the Dependence upon the Vine

## 3. So, first, this Parable teaches us about the Deceitfulness of our Worldly Desires

- a. We see this right from the start, don't we?

- i. We don't get any indication from Jesus in this story of how old the two sons are,
  - 1. But clearly, these sons are still young enough to be under the father's roof
    - a. And they are apparently still both under his care and provision
      - i. In other words, the sons had EVERYTHING they needed in their father's house
        - 1. For those of you kids here who are still living at home, you know EXACTLY how this feels, don't you?
          - a. How much time did any of you teens spend this week worrying about the electric bill at your house?
          - b. How many times did you sit down and make out a grocery list, and then go to the store to get everything for your meals for this week?
      - ii. You didn't have to do ANY of that did you?
        - 1. And I would imagine that, for most of us adults, we didn't have to worry about any of that either when we were younger, did we?
    - b. If you grew up in an average, middle income American home, then you had EVERYTHING you needed
      - i. You had the food you needed...
      - ii. You had the clothes you needed...
      - iii. You had a roof over your head and a warm bed to sleep in
  - 2. When we're under the care of good, living parents, most of us can agree...
    - a. We didn't lack for ANYTHING when it came to our basic needs and comforts
- ii. Well, that was the story with these two sons as well
  - 1. The younger son had everything he needed in life
    - a. And even more so, Jesus indicates in verse 12 that this son had an inheritance that was awaiting him as well
      - i. This guy was SET, for quite awhile
    - b. But that wasn't enough for the younger son, was it?
      - i. Maybe he had gone on a trip to this far away country earlier in his life
        - 1. Maybe he had heard from his buddies how awesome this faraway country was
          - a. How lush and extravagant it was...
          - b. How free it was from parental restrictions...
          - c. How lavishly it would meet all the desires of one's heart
      - ii. The younger son had all that he needed in the house of his father
        - 1. But he longed for the dream of the far country
  - 2. So the young son went to his father, he DEMANDED his inheritance, NOW
    - a. And he went off to the far country, where he then squandered EVERYTHING in reckless living
      - i. In the place where he expected to find happiness and freedom and the fulfillment of all his wants
        - 1. This young man instead found despair and slavery and a complete UNFULLFILLMENT in every area of his life
          - a. And Jesus tells us in verse 16 that even the pigs were better off than how this young man ended up
  - iii. Brothers and sisters, we must realize that we are ALL in danger of falling into the same trap that this young man fell into

1. When we, who have been given EVERYTHING we need by our heavenly Father, begin to look at the world around us and say, “No, THAT, OUT THERE is what I REALLY want!”
  - a. The scary thing is, that our Father will often give it to us
    - i. Just think about the father in the parable
      1. He didn’t HAVE TO give the younger son his share of the inheritance
        - a. There was nothing that bound him to do what any of his sons told him to do, least of all the YOUNGEST son
      - ii. And yet the father gave the son what he wanted, didn’t he
        1. Clearly, from the end of the passage that we read earlier, the father LOVED this son
          - a. It’s not like he gave his son his inheritance out of some sort of cold indifference or apathy
        - iii. He loved his son, and yet he also ALLOWED his son to go out and live his life the way that HE wanted to
      - iv. Friends, the Scriptures are clear, this is how our Father will often respond to our childish and selfish demands as well
        1. We see this played out for us in very painful way in Romans, chapter 1, so go ahead and turn there in your Bibles
  - b. As we’re reading the Apostle Paul’s words, I want you to have in mind the picture of the father and the younger son in Jesus’ Parable
    - i. Starting in verse 21, Paul writes,
      1. *<sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. <sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup>because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. <sup>26</sup>For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup>and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. <sup>28</sup>And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup>foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*
    - ii. Friends, this ought to be one of the most frightening passages in all the Scriptures
      1. Three times, Paul says these terrifying words... “God gave them up”
        - a. When the people wanted to chase after false idols, God GAVE THEM UP to the lustful desires of their hearts
        - b. When the people wanted to chase after sexual freedom and sexual immorality, God GAVE THEM UP to their dishonorable passions

- c. When the people refused to acknowledge God in their lives, God GAVE THEM UP to all the fruits that a godless life has to offer
        - i. Envy... murder... strife... deceit... gossip... slander...
          - 1. The list goes on and on, doesn't it?
    - iii. This is the reality that Jesus shows us in the Parable of the Prodigal Son
      - 1. God our Father loves us with an abundant, ever-providing love
        - a. But if we look at all that He has provided for us, and then we look at what the world has to offer us, and we say, "I want THE WORLD instead"
          - i. Then God, IN HIS LOVE, will often give it to us
            - 1. For so many times, this is the ONLY way He can break down our own self-centered desires
      - 2. Do you want to pursue the riches of this life, and all the pleasures and treasures and comforts of the American Dream, RATHER than RESTING in the provision and care of your Father who made the entire UNIVERSE?
        - a. Fine... chances are, He'll LET YOU go and chase after it
          - i. And when you've wasted countless hours and countless dollars chasing what could never satisfy,
            - 1. Then maybe you'll finally realize ALL that your Father had already given to you
      - 3. Do you want to pursue empty relationships and friendships that do nothing for your walk with the Lord, but instead just feed into the desires of your flesh, RATHER than RESTING in the loving arms of your Father who created you?
        - a. Fine... chances are, He'll LET YOU go and chase after those relationships
          - i. And when you've followed after those who choose not to follow Christ, and you find nothing but unfulfillment there,
            - 1. Then maybe you'll realize ALL that your Father had already provided for you
      - 4. Do you want to abandon God and leave behind the church and all this foolish nonsense about Jesus and sin and eternity, as you see fit to no longer acknowledge God in your life?
        - a. Fine... chances are, He will LET YOU do that as well
          - i. And when, in the midst of your pride, and your foolishness, and your faithlessness, you begin to realize the utter despair and darkness of a godless world,
            - 1. Then maybe you'll realize that all you need to do is turn around, and RUN BACK to your Father who is waiting for you
    - iv. Sometimes, the most loving thing our Father can do for us is to give us the worldly desires of our heart, so we can finally see how deceitful those desires truly are
4. This brings us to the second thing this Parable teaches us... the Parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us about the necessary Death of our Self-Centeredness
  - a. If you turn back to our Parable in Luke, chapter 15, there is a wonderful line at the beginning of verse 17 (I'll give you a moment to get back there in your Bible)
    - i. Look at what Jesus says about the young son in verse 17...
      - 1. "But when he came to himself..."
        - a. When the son finally realized his foolishness
        - b. When he finally realized the recklessness of his choices
        - c. When he finally realized that he was in danger of perishing if he continued on this track

- i. The young son came to himself... and he put to death all of his self-centered desires
  1. He REPENTED of his sins, and then he set his heart to return back to his father
    - a. Only now, instead of demanding, the son would return pleading
    - b. Instead of being full of youthful pride and arrogance, the son would return with brokenness and humility
    - c. Instead of one who insisted upon his own personal rights and wants and desires, the son would return as a servant
      - i. Finally realizing that he was not worthy of being ANYTHING more
- ii. My friends, have you come to yourself, as this young man in the Parable came to himself?
  1. Have you reached the point in your life when you have finally begun to realize that so many of the problems in your life are a result of YOU placing your SELF upon the throne of your heart?
    - a. Are you ready to finally put your self TO DEATH?
- iii. This is the message that Jesus came to proclaim to us, brothers and sisters
  1. All throughout the Gospels, Jesus presents us with a choice
    - a. In Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus puts it in this way...
      - i. *<sup>24</sup>"If anyone would come after me, LET HIM DENY HIMSELF and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"*
        1. It is exceedingly easy to save your life in this world, friends
          - a. Just live your life like everyone else is living their lives
            - i. Chase after the same pleasures and treasures
            - ii. Pursue the same fleeting sources of happiness
            - iii. Enjoy life as you walk in the company of all those traveling down the broad path that leads to destruction
          - b. But what is the profit in all of this, friends, if in the end, you lose your soul?
        - b. Jesus is clear, if you desire to follow after him, then you must put to death your self-centeredness
          - i. But the beauty of all of it is this...
            1. The moment that you come to yourself, and you put to death your self-centeredness, THAT is when you will truly find your life
    2. And just listen to how Jesus defines ETERNAL life in John 17:3... he says,
      - a. *<sup>3</sup>"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."*
        - i. What is the life that TRULY matters?
          1. It is not a life spent recklessly chasing after our own desires
          2. It is not a life living in ease and abundance and self-gratification
          3. It is not a life of awards and accolades and achievements

- ii. No, friends...
    - 1. Jesus himself says that TRUE life – ETERNAL life – is knowing him... and knowing YOUR FATHER
      - a. Your Father who loved you enough to let you go and chase after your foolish desires
      - b. Your Father who stands ready to receive you back with open arms
      - c. Your Father, who even though you deserve to be no more than a hired hand, will instead welcome you back as His son or His daughter
- iv. How do you find your way back to the TRUE life of knowing your Father?
  - 1. Simple... just put to death your own self-centered desires
    - a. As Paul writes in Colossians 3, verse 5,
      - i. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you
        - 1. Put to death your sexual immorality, your impurity, your evil desires and greed
        - 2. Put to death your anger, your wrath, your malice and slander and obscene talk
        - 3. Put it ALL to death, friends
    - 2. And then put on the clothing of the sons and daughters of God
      - a. As Paul goes on to say in Colossians 3:12,
        - i. *<sup>12</sup>Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup>bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup>And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*
- v. When the father sees the son coming back from a long way off, he ran to the son, he embraced the son, and he called for THE BEST ROBE to be put on the son
  - 1. Brothers and sisters, the VERY BEST ROBE that God our Father has given to us is the robe of the righteousness of Christ
    - a. But here's the thing...
      - i. This robe isn't like a robe that we would wear today
        - 1. It isn't meant to fit over our old rags
          - a. It's meant to cover us IN PLACE OF all those old rags
      - ii. So you must first put to death all the old rags of impurity and idolatry, and THEN you can put on the robe of holiness
      - iii. You must first put to death the filthy garments of anger and slander and malice, and THEN you can put on the robe of kindness and compassion and patience
      - iv. You must first put to death the worn out clothing of your pride and your self-centeredness, and THEN you can put on the robe of meekness and humility and love
- vi. Your Father is standing there waiting for you to finally come to yourself and to see all that you have given up in chasing after the world
  - 1. Put it all to death, my friends!
    - a. Burn all your filthy rags of your self-centeredness, and turn and run back to him

- i. And He will be right their waiting, with the Robe of the Righteousness of Christ
  - vii. This is what the resurrected and ascended Jesus had to say to the church in Laodicea in Revelation chapter 3, when he wrote to them,
    - 1. <sup>17</sup>... you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. <sup>18</sup>I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. <sup>19</sup>Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent!
      - a. Friends, be zealous in your repentance
      - b. Be zealous in casting off all the old garments that have been stained from long years of wallowing with the pigs
      - c. Be zealous in running back to the Father,
        - i. And Jesus himself will clothe you in the white garments of the sons and daughters of God
  - viii. So we learn from the Parable of the Prodigal Son about the deceitfulness of our own worldly desires
    - 1. We learn from the Parable that we must put to death all of those self-centered desires, and turn and run back to the Father
- 5. And finally, the implied lesson of this Parable is that it teaches us about the eternally crucial Dependence that we must have upon the Vine
  - a. Go ahead and turn in your Bibles to John, chapter 15, and we'll close this morning in this passage
    - i. We'll start reading in verse 1... Jesus says,
      - 1. *<sup>1</sup>"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*
  - b. This is the implicit "if only" of Jesus' Parable, isn't it?
    - i. IF ONLY the younger son would have been CONTENT in the home of his father
    - ii. IF ONLY he would have been CONTENT with all that his father was not only providing for him in the present, but also with all that his father had promised for the future
    - iii. IF ONLY he would have been CONTENT to stay in the presence of the one who truly loved him as a son
      - 1. Then the fullness of joy could have been his to enjoy!
        - a. He would have never had to go off and squander everything in reckless living
        - b. He would have never had to experience the despair of poverty
        - c. He would have never had to go through the fear that he would perish...
          - i. Alone, despised, and forgotten

2. He would never have had to walk through ANY OF THAT, if he would have simply remained in his father's house
  - c. Brothers and sisters, this is both the warning and the encouragement for us as well
    - i. We MUST stay connected to the vine of Jesus Christ
      1. We must ABIDE in him
        - a. Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing
          - i. This is Basic Gardening 101, isn't it?
            1. Whether you're talking about a grapevine, or a cucumber vine, or a tomato plant...
              - a. If you cut a branch off, it's no longer going to produce any fruit, is it?
              - b. It may stay green for another day or so,
                - i. But eventually, all the green will turn brown
                - ii. The leaves will fall off
                - iii. And all you will be left with is a lifeless branch
        - ii. Isn't that the story of the Prodigal Son?
          1. The younger son broke himself off from the vine of his Father
            - a. No doubt his leaves remained green for a season
              - i. All sin is fun in the moment
            - b. But over time, as his money began to run out, so did the fun
              - i. His life began to turn brown and dull
            - c. And at the end, he was a nearly lifeless branch, thrown into the pigsty for the remainder of his days
- d. That is the warning for us, friends
  - i. Twice here in John chapter 15, Jesus issues the COMMAND, "Abide in me."
    1. The fact that this is issued as a command clearly implies that there is an expectation of obedience associated with that command
      - a. And Jesus gives us the terms of this obedience in verse 10,
        - i. *<sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*
      - b. So, as followers of Christ, we abide in Christ by obeying his commandments, just as Jesus abides in his Father by obeying HIS commandments
        - i. Jesus sets the model for us
          1. And then he says, "Do as I have done"
      - c. And then we see in verse 11 the REWARD for obedience...
        - i. And that reward, is JOY
          1. Not JUST joy, but the FULLNESS of joy!
            - a. This fulness of joy flows out of truly proving that we are disciples of Jesus
            - b. And this fulness of joy flows out of knowing that our Father is GLORIFIED by our actions
  - ii. Again, just think about the "if only" in our Parable
    1. IF ONLY the Son would have stayed home, and stayed connected to the vine of his father, how pleased would his father have been?
      - a. How delighted the father would have been in the son's humble and willing obedience?
        - i. IF ONLY, the son would have heeded the command to abide in the vine, so much heartache and turmoil could have been avoided

1. So there is a warning for us in this Parable
- iii. But there is also an encouragement
  1. As long as there is still breath in us, we can turn, and return to the Vine, can't we?
    - a. For our Father is a merciful and compassionate Vinedresser
      - i. There will come a Day when the dead and lifeless branches are thrown into the fire and burned up
        1. But as long as you are sitting here, today, ALIVE
        2. And as long as none of us hear the trumpet sound of the return of Jesus
      - ii. Then there is still time for you to repent!
    - b. There is still time for the Vinedresser to lovingly prune off all your dead shoots, and to nourish you back into life
      - i. And what is life?
        1. It is KNOWING Jesus Christ
        2. It is KNOWING the Father
        3. It is abiding in Christ, day by day, as you make the choice to obey all of his commandments
          - a. This is not a burdensome requirement, friends
            - i. For the reward of your obedience is the absolute fullness of joy
      - c. The fullness of joy that comes from drawing near to your Father, and realizing that He has been right there waiting, ready to embrace you in His arms, and clothe you in the Robe of His Son
        - i. Abide in Jesus, brothers and sisters, and all of this can be yours!