

# Luke 15

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*"The Love of the Father"*

**December 21, 2025**

## 1. Intro

- a. O come, O come, Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lowly exile here, until the Son of God appears. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!
  - i. Such a somber, yet beautiful Christmas hymn
    - 1. The lyrics of this hymn actually go all the way back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, where they were a part of the advent liturgy in the European monasteries
      - a. For eight days leading up to Christmas, the monks would chant each stanza in Latin
        - i. And then this would all culminate on Christmas Eve, as they sang the Magnificat,
          - 1. Which was Mary's song that she sang back in Luke, chapter 1,
            - a. Where she magnified the Lord for the glorious news that her son would be the very Son of the Most High God
    - 2. These Latin advent stanzas continued to be sung for many centuries, until an Anglican Priest named John Mason Neale,
      - a. Translated them into English, and put them to the tune that we now sing today
        - i. The tune that he put these words to is actually a 15<sup>th</sup> century melody that was used by the nuns as a processional chant during a burial
          - 1. This certainly explains the gravity of this song, doesn't it?
    - 3. And yet, in the midst of the weightiness, there is also JOY, isn't there?
      - a. With every stanza, there is the repeated refrain...
        - i. "Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!"
  - ii. Immanuel... the Hebrew word for "God With Us"
    - 1. This is at the very heart of why we celebrate Christmas, isn't it?
      - a. Jesus wasn't just a good man who taught people how to love
      - b. He wasn't just a good prophet who had a lot of good teachings to make the world a better place
        - i. No, Jesus is the Word made Flesh
          - 1. An equal person of our Triune God
            - a. Along with the Father and the Holy Spirit
          - 2. We sang about this as well this morning, didn't we?
    - ii. In the second verse of "O Come All Ye Faithful," we sang...
      - 1. God of God, Light of Light, Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb, True God begotten, not created
        - a. O come let us adore Him!
    - c. Jesus is Emmanuel... God of God, Light of Light... GOD WITH US!
      - i. And his coming to us as a little baby boy is cause for great adoration and rejoicing indeed!
  - b. Well, we will spend this morning looking at several different titles of our Lord Jesus,
    - i. But I want to frame our message under the LARGER heading of "The Love of the Father"
      - 1. For Jesus DID NOT just decide to come to this earth as a little baby on his own initiative

- a. John 3:16-17 reminds us,
  - i. *<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*
- 2. The Father GAVE the Son to us
- 3. The Father SENT the Son into the world
  - a. WHY?
    - i. Because God the Father, is a LOVING Father
    - b. Apart from the love of the Father, there would be no baby born of the Virgin Mary
    - c. Apart from the love of the Father, there would be no angels sweetly singing over the plains, no shepherds responding in jubilee
    - d. Apart from the love of the Father, my friends, there would be NO Christmas
  - c. And so, we will certainly celebrate this morning the coming of Jesus into this world
    - i. But we will do so under the framework of the love of our Father in Heaven
  - d. For the past two weeks, we've been looking at Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son, here in Luke 15, verses 11-32
    - i. Two weeks ago, we looked at the Parable from the perspective of the younger son
      - 1. The younger son, of course, is the Prodigal Son
        - a. He is the son who went to his father, and demanded his share of the inheritance
          - i. And when he had been given the money, he left and went out to the far country
            - 1. Where Jesus tells us that he squandered all of it in reckless living
          - ii. But as this younger son finally realized how foolish he had been, he made a decision to return back to his father
            - 1. He who was once selfish and reckless and full of pride, had now been brought low to a place of brokenness and humility
              - a. So the younger son returned home, filthy and broke, with nothing of his own to bring back to the Father
          - iii. And Jesus tells us that, when the Father saw the younger son, he RAN to his son, full of compassion
            - 1. He embraced his son and kissed him
            - 2. He clothed him in his best robe
            - 3. And he threw a great feast for his son who once was lost, but now is found
        - 2. From the perspective of the younger son, this was a time of incredible JOY
          - a. The younger son reminds us of the dangers of sin and reckless living, but he also reminds us that, as long as you have breath in your lungs, there is still time for repentance
            - i. There is still time to come back home
              - 1. That was the story of the YOUNGER son
        - ii. But last week, we looked at this same Parable from the perspective of the OLDER son
          - 1. The older son was the GOOD son, wasn't he?
            - a. He was the hard worker... the obedient son... the one who checked off all the right boxes

- i. But as we saw in his story, the older son was full of the sin of self-centeredness
  - 1. He didn't care that his younger brother had come home
  - 2. He didn't care that his father was overjoyed at his brother's return
- ii. Instead, the older brother was full of anger and resentment and bitterness
  - 1. He had worked hard for MANY years, but HE never got the kind of attention that his reckless brother was now getting
    - a. His heart was full of self-centeredness and entitlement
    - b. And therefore, his heart became cold and uncaring toward everyone around him
- 2. His father tried to talk some sense into him
  - a. He said to the older brother, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours"
    - i. But we get no indication that the older brother came to understand these things
    - ii. We're left with the assumption that he continued on in his self-centered anger and pride...
      - 1. He continued on in the coldness of his heart
      - 2. And as a result, he missed out on the JOY and GLADNESS that could have been his
  - 3. The older son reminds us that the sins of self-centeredness and entitlement, if left undealt with, will eventually lead to a cold heart
    - a. And a cold heart is incapable of gladness and rejoicing over the things of the Lord
- iii. So, we looked at this Parable from the perspective of the younger son
  - 1. And, even though his story ended beautifully, we still faced this reality...
    - a. IF ONLY the younger son would have STAYED in the house of his father
      - i. IF ONLY he would have abided in his father's presence
        - 1. SO MUCH pain and heartache could have been avoided
      - ii. But the same thing goes for the older brother as well
  - 2. IF ONLY the older son would have realized all that his father had was his
    - a. IF ONLY he would have not been so incredibly self-centered
      - i. So much GLADNESS could have been his

- 2. IF ONLY, these two brothers would have realized the LOVE of their father, how wonderful would their lives have been?
- a. We see the love of the father expressed in his GENEROSITY, don't we?
  - i. Back to the younger son at the beginning of the Parable...
    - 1. The father didn't have to give the son his share of his inheritance
      - a. Typically you don't get your inheritance until the one holding it passes away, right?
        - i. The father was still very much alive
      - 2. And yet, he still gave his younger son all that he asked for
  - ii. We're reminded in this Parable of Jesus' words in Matthew 7, verses 9-11, when he said
    - 1. *...which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup>If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*

- a. Our Father in heaven is a GENEROUS Father, because He is a LOVING Father
  - i. Now, we don't want to gloss over the actions of the younger son
    - 1. The younger son squandered everything his father had given to him in reckless living, just as we also are so prone to do
  - ii. But that was a result of the sin of HIS heart, NOT a result of the generosity of his father
    - 1. The father LOVED his son, and therefore he generously gave his inheritance to him
- b. We also see the love of the father expressed in his MERCY
  - i. The younger son, when his eyes were finally opened to see the foolishness of his ways,
    - 1. He was fully prepared to go back to his father and become one of his servants
      - a. He realized he was no longer worthy to be called his father's son
      - b. He realized that his sinful actions had resulted in a deep chasm between him and his father
      - c. He realized the tremendous cost of his rebellion against his father
    - 2. And so, he returned to his father – with a broken and contrite spirit, realizing he had NOTHING to bring to make everything right...
      - a. Except for himself
        - i. At this moment, the father COULD HAVE allowed him back and yet relegated him to the role of a servant
        - ii. The father COULD HAVE outright rejected the son
  - ii. But instead, the father sees the son coming from a long way off, and he RAN to his wayward son, and he showered him with hugs and kisses
    - 1. The son voices his repentance and his brokenness to his father
      - a. But it's almost as if the father doesn't even hear him
        - i. Instead, the father answers his son by saying to the servants,
          - 1. *“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!”*
      - b. Where the father had EVERY RIGHT to bring wrath and justice down upon his son, he instead showed inexplicable MERCY
        - i. He had already given the son his inheritance, and the son wasted every last bit of it
        - ii. And yet, here we see the father lavishly pouring out gifts upon his son once again
          - 1. Not just any robe... but the BEST robe
          - 2. The ring, which likely represented the family name, signifying that he was no mere hired hand – he was his father's SON
          - 3. And new shoes, likely replacing the tattered ones the son had worn out working in the pigsties
            - a. And then, of course, the father has the fattened calf slaughtered for his son, and threw a big feast with music and dancing and celebration
        - c. The father LOVED his son, and therefore he showed MERCY to his son
      - 2. So we see the love of the father expressed in his generosity
      - 3. We see the love of the father expressed in his mercy
    - c. And third, we see the love of the father expressed in his ENTREATING
      - i. In the midst of all the feasting and celebration over the return of the younger son,



- iii. Not only that, but the Bible tells us that it has brought the Father great DELIGHT to give us an entire KINGDOM
  - 1. ALL OF THIS the Father generously holds out to all who would believe in His Son
- c. And what do we do instead?
  - i. We spend our lives pursuing a bunch of shiny treasures to try to make ourselves happy and impress our neighbors
  - ii. We spend our lives chasing after worldly pleasures as we seek to feed the desires of our own flesh
  - iii. We exchange the glory of God for a bunch of idols made by human hands
    - 1. The idols of wealth and prosperity
    - 2. The idols of ambition and influence
    - 3. The idols of self-gratification and the pursuit of our own personal happiness
- d. And yet, God looks at us who are the prodigal sons and daughters, wasting our lives in reckless self-indulgence,
  - i. And He shows us His love by extending MERCY to us
    - 1. The gift of His Son is for YOU, wayward sons
    - 2. The gift of His Son is for YOU, reckless daughters
      - a. For God so loved YOU, that He gave His only Son, that you might believe in him and have eternal life!
- ii. And the good news is that this mercy has been extended to all of us “older sons” as well
  - 1. The older son in the Parable ALSO had all that he needed in the presence of his father
    - a. But that wasn’t enough for him either
      - i. So he got angry... he got bitter and resentful
        - 1. Yes, toward his younger brother
      - ii. But he was even more angry with his father, wasn’t he?
    - b. Is that not the story for all the rest of us?
      - i. For many of us, this life has not shaped out the way we had dreamed it
        - 1. We’ve walked through disappointment after disappointment
        - 2. We’ve experienced pain and heartache
        - 3. The bad days far outnumber the good days
    - c. And so, in our hearts, we grow cold toward God
      - i. I mean, if there truly is a God in Heaven, and my life has ended up in this place,
        - 1. Then one of two things must be true...
          - a. Either this God doesn’t really have control over what happens in this world
          - b. Or, this God doesn’t really care about what happens in this world
        - ii. And all we are left with is bitterness... anger... resentment
    - d. And yet, God looks at us who are standing outside in our self-centered entitlement,
      - i. And He shows us His love by extending MERCY to us
        - 1. The gift of His Son is for YOU, angry sons
        - 2. The gift of His Son is for YOU, bitter daughters

- a. For God so loved YOU, that He gave His only Son, that you might believe in him and have eternal life!
- 2. God has shown His love for us by generously giving us His only Son
- 3. He has shown His love for us by showing mercy to us, for NOT ONE OF US deserve the gift of His Son
- c. And in His generosity, in His mercy, God the Father shows his great love for us by ENTREATING us to come in and join the feast
  - i. We saw this a few weeks ago back in Luke 14, when Jesus told the Parable of the Great Banquet
    - 1. In this Parable, Jesus tells of a man who once gave a great banquet and invited many to come
      - a. He ENTREATED them to come
        - i. But those who got the first invites all began to make excuses for why they couldn't come
      - b. So the master of the house said to his servant,
        - i. "Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame."
        - 1. The servant did as he was told, but there was still more room
      - c. So the master then said to the servant,
        - i. "Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled!"
  - d. My friends, there is still room in the Father's house!
    - i. There is still room at the table of His great banquet!
      - 1. And so, in His LOVE, the Father ENTREATS us to come in
        - a. Come away from the deceitful lures of temptation in the far country
        - b. Come away from the cold-hearted bitterness of all those outside of the feast
        - c. Come away from ALL OF IT, and COME INTO the Father's house!
    - ii. In John chapter 14, Jesus gives this wonderful promise to all who will receive the invitation of the Father
      - 1. In verse 1, he says,
        - a. *1"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."*
          - i. Jesus himself is preparing the Father's house... FOR US
          - ii. He is making all things ready for the great feast that is to come
            - 1. And, when the Father says that it is time for the feast to begin, Jesus will return, and he will bring all of the sons and daughters home
      - 2. So the great question is, how do I get into the feast? How do I respond to the entreating of the Father?
        - a. Jesus answers this question in John 14:6 with these simple words...
          - i. *6"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*
    - e. Friends, this is the connecting thread that runs through all of Jesus' Parables in Luke chapter 15
      - i. A few weeks ago, Seth preached on the Parable of the Lost Sheep, and he reminded us that Jesus is indeed the Good Shepherd
        - 1. HE is the one who has come to call all his wayward sheep home
        - 2. HE is the one who has come to seek and to save the lost

- ii. In the Parable of the Lost Coin, we saw that the woman was seeking diligently to find the one coin that she had lost
  - 1. But before she could find that coin, she first had to light a lamp to illuminate the darkness
    - a. In this Parable, we are reminded that Jesus is indeed the Light of the World
      - i. In his coming into this world, a great light has shone in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it
      - ii. And by HIS light, the lost are being found
  - iii. But what about the Parable of the Prodigal Son?
    - 1. Where do we see Christ in this story?
      - a. We see Christ, my friends, in the generosity of the father, as he clothed his son in the BEST robe that he had
        - i. This is what happens to us, when we come to the Father with a broken and contrite heart, in humility and repentance, with nothing to bring to him but ourselves
          - 1. Our Father at that moment clothes us in the robe of Christ's righteousness, and we are brought into His family as His sons and daughters
      - b. We see Christ, my friends, in the mercy of the father
        - i. For we have ALL fallen short of the glory of God
          - 1. We have ALL spent our lives in pursuit of the pleasures and treasures of this world
          - 2. We have ALL spent far too many hours in bitterness or resentment toward God
          - 3. We have ALL lived our lives in sinful rebellion against our Father
        - ii. But instead of giving us what we deserve for our sins, our Father in Heaven instead poured out His wrath upon His TRUE Son,
          - 1. As Jesus took our sins upon HIS shoulders
          - 2. As Jesus went to the cross to bear the punishment that WE deserved
          - 3. As the perfect and sinless Lamb of God died, so we might live
        - iii. The only way we are able to enter into the house of the Father is because God's judgment was satisfied in the death of His Son,
          - 1. And now, WE have been extended MERCY
      - iv. Without Jesus, there is no way for Prodigals to return
        - 1. Without Jesus, there is no way for cold hearts of stone to be filled with life
          - a. Because of the love of the Father, Immanuel, God With Us, has come
  - 4. He has come as the Rod of Jesse promised in Isaiah 11, verses 1-5
    - a. *1There shall come forth a shoot [or a rod] from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, 4but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. 5Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*
      - i. Jesus has come as the rod of Jesse
        - 1. Jesse was the father of King David

- a. King David was given the Covenant from God that a King would come from his line
  - i. The throne of this King would be established for all eternity
  - ii. His rule and his reign would span through all of time
    - 1. Jesus, who came into this world as a helpless baby boy, born in the little town of Bethlehem
    - 2. Jesus is the promised King whose Kingdom shall endure forever
      - a. His Kingdom will outlast all the kingdoms of this world, even the kingdom of Satan himself
- b. Therefore, we sing...
  - i. O come Thou rod of Jesse free, Thine own from Satan's tyranny. From depths of Hell thy people save, and give them victory o'er the grave. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!
    - 1. Jesus has come as the promised rod of Jesse

5. He has also come as the promised Dayspring from on high, as Zechariah sang about in Luke 1:68-79,

- a. *<sup>68</sup>Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people <sup>69</sup>and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, <sup>71</sup>that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; <sup>72</sup>to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, <sup>73</sup>the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us <sup>74</sup>that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup>in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. <sup>76</sup>And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, <sup>77</sup>to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, <sup>78</sup>because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high <sup>79</sup>to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

- i. God visited his people, as the Holy Spirit overshadowed the young virgin Mary, and the Son of God was conceived in her womb
  - 1. All the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament would be fulfilled in this Son, Jesus
    - a. Deliverance would come through him
    - b. The knowledge of salvation would be given through him
    - c. The forgiveness of sins would be made possible through him
  - 2. Because of the tender mercy of God, Zechariah sang that "the sunrise shall visit us from on high"
    - a. I believe the New King James translation renders this verse more correctly when it says,
      - i. "Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us"
        - 1. And this word, Dayspring, is capitalized
      - ii. For the Dayspring is Jesus
        - 1. And through the Dayspring, light has been given to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death
          - a. And through the light of the Dayspring, our feet are guided into the way of peace
    - b. Therefore, we sing...

- i. O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high, and cheer us by Thy drawing nigh, Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!
  - 1. Jesus has come as the promised Rod of Jesse
  - 2. He has come as the promised Dayspring from on high

6. And Jesus has come as the promised Key of David, found in Revelation 3, verses 7-13...

- a. *7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. 8 I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. 11 I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

- i. My friends, Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of God, holds the Key of David
  - 1. The Key of David opens the door to the very Temple of God
    - a. No, not some earthly temple that man would attempt to build
  - 2. This is the great Temple of Heaven
    - a. This is the House of our Father
      - i. The House where Jesus has gone to prepare our place
      - ii. The House where the great feast is being set
  - 3. Jesus holds the key to the door of this house, and he has set before us an open door
    - a. And by the coming of Jesus into this world, God the Father entreats us to enter in
      - i. Those who enter in through Jesus will become pillars in the Temple of God
      - ii. They will never be cast out
      - iii. The name of God and the name of the new Jerusalem will be written upon them
      - iv. The name of Jesus will be sealed upon their hearts
    - b. Therefore, we sing...
      - i. O come, Thou key of David come, and open wide our heavenly home. Make safe the way that leads on high and close the path to misery. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!
- b. This is the great message of Christmas, my friends
  - i. Through the love of the Father, the gift of His only begotten Son has been given
  - ii. Through the love of the Father, His tender mercy has been extended to us
  - iii. Through the love of the Father, Immanuel has come
    - 1. And through Immanuel, God With Us, God our Father entreats us to enter into the great banquet of His Kingdom
      - a. May we all JOYFULLY receive his invitation!!