

The Good Son

The *Parable of the Good Son* may not ring a bell. I am actually referring to the older son in the parable of *The Prodigal Son* from Luke 15.

The *prodigal son* asked for his inheritance, left home, lived a riotous life, and then returned home begging for a job as a slave. He was accepted back by his loving father as a son. The lesson is about God's mercy for the lost.

The older son stayed home; he was *the good son*.

The older son went about his work day after day, just a good son should. There was one day, however, that was remarkably different. He returned to his father's house and heard music. It sounded like a celebration . . . It was a celebration!

One of the servants told him that the celebration was for his younger brother who had returned home. The fattened calf, normally set aside for a surprise visit of an important guest, had been slaughtered for the feast.

The older son boiled with anger!

In our day he would have been on his cell phone texting a message or posting his complaint on Facebook. HE had not made poor choices in life, not like his younger brother. It was not enough that his younger brother had returned home; they were throwing a party! Anyone would be angry! How insensitive.

Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever found yourself doing what you were supposed to be doing, yet you were overlooked or taken advantage of? Life's inequities can often arouse anger.

Hard work and dedication should be rewarded. Excellence should be rewarded. Personal sacrifice should be rewarded. Honesty and integrity should be rewarded.

In many respects the older son had every right to be angry. The younger son had disrupted the family enterprise. It was not simply a matter of taking money from the family's savings account. Livestock and property were probably sold in order give the son his part of

the inheritance. The family name was undoubtedly tarnished.

Perhaps the greatest inequity was that the foolish younger son had made his way back home and expected something more. A person could easily reason that the younger son was leeching off the older brother's share of the estate.

Sometimes Christians feel a sense of anger toward others who have wandered away from Christ but later returned. The younger is a picture a Christian who has chased after a life of sin for a time, but later returns home to Christ. The foolish younger son should have known better . . . just as every Christian should know better than to leave Christ.

The older brother displayed an attitude of arrogance. He had accepted his brother's exit from the family and had effectively forgotten him. Now, he felt that the celebration for his brother's return to be unfair. It was unfair because of his brother's sin AND because of *his own* righteousness. In HIS righteousness HE deserved better than his sinful brother. When a Christian is angry about the return of an erring Christian the same arrogance is present.

The father said to the older brother: "My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours."

The older brother could not see that all the wonderful blessings he enjoyed came from his father. So it is with us. All blessings, physical and spiritual, come from God.

The selfish arrogance of the older brother had displaced something. What was missing?

Earlier in Luke 15, a shepherd left 99 sheep that were safe to go in search of his lost sheep. A woman went to great effort to find her lost coin.

We call it the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but he was also a *lost brother*. *Who went in search of his lost brother???*

May God destroy our arrogance with compassion for the lost.

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