

5 - Now This Is Living!

Luke 15:24-32

(Video)

Think about a time when you felt ALIVE.

Maybe it was...

When you made the team.

Or when you asked her out and she said, "YES!"

Your wedding day.

The birth of a baby.

Landing your dream job.

When your team won the championship!

The point is all of us can point to a moment in time when we felt more ALIVE than we ever had before. We love those moments! We wish we could live in them forever! I'd like moments like that to never end!

But those are... moments! And the reality is the rest of life often doesn't feel very alive...instead it can feel very far from that.

Have you ever felt like you're going through life, but there's no life going through you?

I know I have.

Today we are wrapping up our series called "Finding Your Way Back to God" where we've been talking about 5 Awakenings, or 5 realities that can help us find our way back to God.

These awakenings are not just something that happens when we initially find our way back to God; they are awakenings that we continually need in our lives as Christ-followers. So in this series we've talked about:

There's got to be more! We discover our longings for love, purpose, and meaning are given to us by God and intended to lead us back to him.

In the second awakening, we reach the point where we say: "**I wish I could start over.**" We awaken to Regret, we recognize how we've tried to fulfill these longings on our own and they've taken us farther away from where we want to be, rather than bringing us closer.

This leads us to the third awakening... when we admit we are powerless to fulfill our longings on our own. We say, "**I can't do this on my own.**" When we admit this, we discover there is help and that help has a name. His name is Jesus.

Last week we talked about awakening to love. This is the moment we realize **God really loves me after all.** In this awakening we discover our identity as someone who is radically loved by our Heavenly Father, and we are accepted by Him.

Today we are going to talk about the 5th Awakening: Awakening to Life. It's the place we get to when we are home and finally understand.... **Now this is really living!**

What frightens me is I think most people who call themselves Christians never get to this point. We don't feel truly Alive. We do not think this is really living. If anything, following Jesus seems like a buzz kill.

This is surprising and sad since Jesus said in John 10:10, "[I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.](#)"

So today I want to finish looking at the story Jesus told in Luke 15 and wrestle with the question:

How does finding my way back to God bring me life?

We are going to answer this question today, not by looking at the younger son in the story Jesus told, but we are actually going to look at the older son. Now to do this, I want to recap the entire chapter of Luke 15. It's so important to understand the context of why Jesus is telling these stories.

Luke 15:1 says, "[Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.](#) **2** [But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."](#)

The person speaking is Jesus.

His audience: Sinners, Tax-collectors, Pharisees and Teachers of the Law. (Tough crowd)

The problem: the religious crowd is muttering about Jesus associating with "sinners." It blows their mind that someone claiming to be the Messiah would even think about talking to these people, let alone eating with these people because that was a sign of friendship. And how could you ruin your reputation by eating with a crowd like that?

Jesus hears their muttering and decides to answer it by telling a story... actually 3 stories.

The first one is about a shepherd and his lost sheep.

Luke 15:3-7 reads: **3** [Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.](#)

The lost sheep was so valuable to the shepherd that he left the 99 in danger to go after the lost sheep. Why? Because that lost sheep was valuable to the shepherd.

In the same way, Jesus is trying to let the crowd of religious people know that these people you are “muttering” about matter to God. That’s why there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than 99 righteous people who do not need to repent.

Jesus doesn’t stop there, He continues on with another story. Verse 8...

8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Just like the shepherd who loses his sheep is happy to find the lost one, so this woman is thrilled when she finds her lost coin. Why? Because it is valuable to her.

These 10 coins would be part of her wedding dowry and she traditionally would have worn them in a headdress. If something were to happen that she would be widowed or on her own, this money would be all she had to live on! So yes, if she loses a coin, it is valuable to her.

Remember what Jesus was trying to communicate? He was looking at this crowd muttering about the “sinners” Jesus was associating with, and He simply tells them... just like the lost sheep was valuable to the shepherd, and just like the lost coin is valuable to this woman, these people matter to God.

In fact, in verse 10 I think it’s crucial to see Who Jesus says is rejoicing in Heaven. There is rejoicing in the “presence” of the angels of God. Who’s presence will the angels of GOD be in?

God is the One rejoicing when a sinner repents!!! Why? Because these people matter to Him.

Then Jesus comes to the story of a man with 2 sons...

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

This whole series we have focused on the younger son.

His sin: **I don’t need the Father.**

And through his own journey of trying to satisfy himself and figure out what make him happy, he wastes his life and his inheritance from his father. But when he hits bottom, he wishes he could start over and decides that even the people who work for his dad have it better than this. He comes to his senses and decides to travel home.

Of course the Father has a reaction we would never expect. And... “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”

His Father gives him a robe, a ring and sandals to wear. He completely restores his son. His son is not a worker, he’s part of the family!

And we love the way verse 24 wraps up the younger son's story: [Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.](#)

If the story were to end there, if Jesus had quit speaking, we would still love this story. It would be famous! But Jesus didn't stop there.

Verse 25: [25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field.](#)

Oh yeah... the man had two sons. Look at what happens when he discovers his younger brother has returned home.

[25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'](#)

[28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in.](#)

Why is he so angry?

(I'm sure this isn't the first time someone looked at him and asked, "You mad, bro?")

But he is angry that his brother has come home. He's really angry that his father is embracing him. How could dad welcome that brat home?

So the older son refuses to go into the party.

Now, look at what happens. Verse 28: [28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.](#)

Isn't that incredible!?!? The Father goes out to both of His children and wants them to come home.

But the older son is too angry. He can't believe his dad welcomed home the son who disgraced the family name. He gets so mad he has an outburst against his dad. Verse 29...

[29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'](#)

When you read between the lines, we understand the older son's motivation is...

SELFISHNESS: "Father, you never GAVE me..."

You never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. Its like I couldn't have friends because you wouldn't do anything for me dad.

The older son is looking at what he considers is owed to him by the father.

He's so mad when he thinks about what his brother has wasted that he won't even call him his brother. "But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!"

Then the older son focuses his anger again by looking at all he has done serving his father.

FATHER – LOOK AT WHAT I HAVE DONE!

Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. In other words, he is telling the Father: **YOU OWE ME.** His selfishness is getting the best of him.

You see, the older son is also not in relationship with the Father and doesn't want the father, he wants what is owed to him. He is not concerned with the emotions or feelings of the Father... He is not concerned about the pain his father's heart went through when his brother left home. He's just mad. He's just selfish. So rather than celebrating his brother's return home, rather than sharing in his father's joy, he complains and demands what is owed to him.

The younger son sinned through his self-indulgence and seeking of gratification. The older son sins through extreme morality that demands the Father give what he is owed.

Both are sinning in the same way...

Father, I don't need you, just what you have for me.

Even when the older son refuses to come home, the Father goes out to him.

31 "My son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

Just like that lost sheep was valuable to the shepherd, and just like the coin was valuable to the woman, both of these sons are valuable to the Father.

There are a few lessons and questions we need to learn from this story.

1 - Which brother are you?

Remember the audience? Sinners, Tax-collectors, Pharisees, Teachers... Who is Jesus speaking to with the younger son's story? Sinners and Tax-collectors. They have opportunity to repent and come home. They are valuable to their Heavenly Father.

Who is Jesus speaking to with the older son's story? The Pharisees and teachers... people who tell God that I have done everything right, and You owe me.

Which brother are you?

Either through selfish decisions or seeking our own gratification, we have wasted life. Or... through our extreme morality we assume God owes us.

But in both situations the sons leave relationship with the Father out of the equation. It's not about needing the Father, it's about what He gives us. So which brother are you?

Here is a second lesson for us...

2 - Do you know your Father's heart?

Remember the theme of the stories Jesus has told... something lost, searched for, something found...

But in this story, the younger son is never searched for?

We have a son who knows the Father, but chooses to walk away from Him. Yes, it was the younger son's decision, but many historians talk about the responsibility of the older brother to go and search for the younger brother!

If the older son had really understood and known his Father's heart, he would have gone searching for his younger brother. But instead, he was content in his morality to sit back, do his part on the family farm, and be unconcerned with the lostness of his brother.

All the while, he is lost because he refuses a relationship with his Father!

Here is the hardest part of the entire chapter... the chapter ends with the Father pleading for His oldest son to come home and join the party. But we do not know what the answer is. Jesus leaves the story open ended. Will he embrace his Father and come home? Or will he remain in his pride and selfishness and refuse to go home?

Here is the fear:

If our churches aren't appealing to younger brothers, they must be full of more older brothers than we'd like to think.

Do you know your Father's heart?

A big key to determining that answer is to ask...

3 - What do I celebrate?

What we celebrate is important because it shows what is important to us.

Because of March Madness, there are many people happy today, while others are sad. Some are celebrating, others are depressed. Why? Because these teams and players matter to us. We celebrate what is important to us.

If you want to be truly home and not lost in this life, then we need to want the Father more than anything else. It's not about what He gives us, it's about Him. Knowing His heart. And once we know His heart, and understand how valuable the people around us are, you will do everything you can to run after your younger brothers and sisters because we have a Heavenly Father who's heart breaks for them.

And if we want to ultimately feel alive, it's when we get to the point we want God and His will more than anything else in this world. When we get there, then we will truly say:

Now this is living!

Jesus said in John 10:10, "[I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.](#)"

We will experience this life when we stop only wanting stuff from our Father, and begin wanting to be home with our Father.

COMMUNION

Jesus wanted to be with His Father more than anything. Jesus wanted to do His Father's will... even if it meant going to the cross.

But Jesus did this because He understood His Father's heart, and this was the way to help the lost child come home. Let's take time to remember and give thanks.

(Video after prayer)