

THE LOST SON

Speaker: Resource

Time: Saturday evening, approximately 7:45 p.m.

Length: 20 minutes maximum

Purpose:

1. To focus on the change of heart in confession-repentance and on its joy.
2. To touch on the father, who gives over generously and then waits; the younger son, who squanders and needs to receive forgiveness; and the older son, who doesn't understand repentance or love.
3. To overcome our reluctance to repent by highlighting the expected love and forgiveness of the Father.
4. To have a “new beginning” and a return “home” to God.

Outline: Begin Your Talk Here

Introduction:

- A. Tell the parable of the Lost Son in your own words (Luke 15:11–32). *(Avoid reading the story directly from the Bible.)*
- B. In this parable (story), Jesus describes
 1. The sinner’s turning from what he once was like and turning to something better (repentance—turning back to God) because life in Christ is so much better.
 2. God’s joy and encouraging forgiveness when the wayward son returns to the loving arms of the father.

I. The Younger Son

- A. He leaves home.

He took the inheritance from his dad. This was unheard of since the father was still living. Yet the father gave the younger son his share. The son goes to a distant land where he loved his new life, eventually getting caught up in sinful ways. His new friends were not interested in him as a human being but only in his money and lifestyle. Sin may look good at first, but it is destructive. We all, in a way, have a “distant land” that is spiritually far away from God. *(Perhaps now is the time to share some struggle, temptation, or sins that particularly trouble you.)*

- B. He feels pain.

When the boy’s money runs out, his new friends abandon him. He sinks so low and finds himself so lost that he gets work feeding pigs. A Jew working and eating among unclean animals? Even the pigs were more valuable than he was. He felt the powerfully painful results of sin: physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual disaster. *(Perhaps here is a place to share some personal experience.)* Sometimes, we have to reach “rock bottom” to know the destructive nature of sin.

- C. He sees the error of his ways and comes to his senses.

He wants to make it better on his own. He wants to take a job for his dad and work his way back. He thinks he can make things better on his own—but this is NOT his change of heart! His change of heart is about to happen.

II. The Waiting Father

- A. He runs to his son.

The father, seeing his son in the distance, runs (again, unbelievable that the father would do this), and embraces his son and gives him tender love. Now, the son truly turns in repentance (change of heart!) to his father and confesses his sin: he is “transformed” by his father’s love! He sees that the father’s love and mercy is greater than his sin.

- B. The son confesses his sin.

Honesty . . . truth . . . no more hiding or trying to do it his own way but totally at the mercy of the father, the son turns his life toward the father and finds total and unexpected joy! He realizes the power of sin BUT ALSO the greater power of God’s love!

- C. His lost son is found.

The son receives loving forgiveness and acceptance. At home, the father restores the son as an heir and not a slave. He gives his son gifts and proclaims him “not lost.” The son has “come home” to the loving embrace of his father, just as God invites you and me to come home to His love today.

III. The Older Son

- A. The attitude of the older son/brother (verses 25–32) reveals itself.

He is angry—at the happy, joyful reception given his brother who had strayed from home. He is even more angry that the younger brother has been admitted back into the home as a loved and forgiven son. There is no hint of pity or affection; he will not even say hello to his brother. (*Give examples of how this is sometimes the position of some people, maybe even yourself.*) The older son becomes self-righteous. He has not kept the Great Commandment: “Love one another . . .” We, too, can become jealous of other people. We have tried to live close to God. How can someone who strays and lives a sinful life get restored and loved so easily?

- B. The father is very kind to the older son.

He goes out and pleads with him. The father loves this son too, even though the older son is not filled with forgiveness. He does not turn his back on his self-righteous son but asks him to look at the situation (verse 32): the son who once was given up as dead is now alive and back home.

IV. Consider the People Involved

- A. The younger son is now restored and renewed. He has come to a new and better appreciation and love for his father. He no longer makes any demands. He just wants to serve his father and be home. God loves us so much, and that makes us want to serve Him.
- B. The older son/brother was always “good,” and he views his brother with contempt and hate.

- C. The father (who is like God), knows when things are bothering us, waits for us, runs to us, loves us, forgives us.

V. *Our Story (Any personal examples?)*

- A. True repentance, a transformation of our lives, can be difficult. Sometimes we need to hear God's Law (Commandments) to get us on the right path, as the Law shows us our sin; sometimes we need to hear the Gospel—God's great, extravagant love through Jesus.
- B. We can go through some of the same things that the younger and the older sons went through. Yet, the father loves and forgives us all. He welcomes us all with open arms.

Conclusion:

God is waiting this evening for each of you, just as the father in this story waited for his son to return home. God is reaching out to you, just as the father reached out to his oldest son in hope for a change of heart. We desire to hear God's Word of forgiveness in our lives. This is an invitation to come home to God.

No discussion question follows this talk.