



STORIES OF THE KINGDOM STAND ALONE 3: GOD, ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR HOUSE?

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Pastor Adrienne Rankin

BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

TEXT(S):

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

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

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

"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.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

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

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 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. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 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.'". (Luke 15:1-2, 11-32)

"I'm just a tiny person standing here, God. Can you even see me?" And I heard God whisper. 'Adrienne, you are more beautiful to me than a mountain. Can a mountain breathe? Can a mountain move? Can a mountain love? No, I created you for these things. That - that is a rock. You? You are my child.'"

-Pastor Adrienne

MESSAGE SUMMARY

While Jesus is spending time with "tax collectors and sinners", the Pharisees grumble about it, believing that if Jesus were really a prophet then he would avoid such people. Jesus realizes that the religious leaders have an "us versus them" mentality when it comes to relating to God. He decides to tell them a parable, comprised of three stories: one about a lost sheep, another about a lost coin, and a final story about a lost son. In each case, the lost object, or person, is valuable because someone has set their affections upon them, whether a sheep, a coin, or a brother. And all of them are reconciled to their pursuer.

The final story of the three has become known as *The Parable of the Prodigal Son*. Curiously there are two sons in the story. One son, The Prodigal, is the younger. He asks his father for his inheritance, in effect saying that he wished his father were dead. His father hands over the younger son's share. Now wealthy, the son goes to a far country where he squanders his money. Impoverished and starving, he decides to return. In ancient Hebrew culture, he could expect to be driven off again as "dead" and no longer a son. His plan? He polishes his resume and decides to ask for a job as one of his father's slaves.

As he comes within sight of home, his father runs to receive him. He gives him fine clothing to replace the son's rags and decides to throw a party for his wayward boy. As his older brother gets wind of what's happening, he returns from the fields enraged. He accuses his father of favoring the young prodigal. All while reciting his own faithfulness. In a fit of pique he says the father never gave him so much as a young goat to party with his friends. The father responds that all he has is available to this older brother. He had only to ask.

It's clear that both sons are lost. Both believe that their father will bestow his love and favor in exchange for something valuable, whether a slave's labor, or the productivity of a "faithful" son. Both see their relationship with the father as a mutually beneficial trading of capacities—fruitfulness for love and blessing. Nothing could be further from the Father's heart.

If the Gospel means anything, it means that God gives freely of himself without requiring anything in trade. But how many of us secretly believe that we, like the brothers, must bring something in exchange? How many of us see all of our relationships through the lens of shame or pride, feeling that we owe, or are owed, something. How many of us interact with others and God from a sure knowledge that God loves and highly values us. We are literally his dwelling, his house! Is God happy with his house? Yes! Yes he is. And so he calls us to be like him, freely loving and reconciling with one another.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What example or story stood out to you in Sunday's sermon?
Why was it significant to you?
2. What was your high/low for this past week (or since group last met)?
What was the best thing that happened and the worst thing that happened?
3. Last time we met, we talked about [whatever you talked about]. Has anyone had a chance to put that lesson into practice? Has it has an impact on your life in anyway?
4. What is one thing that you're looking forward to this week?
What's one that you are dreading?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. What is your opinion on the younger son?
2. What are the stages which the prodigal son goes through?
3. How do you think the father felt while his younger son was away?
4. How do you think the father felt when his older son refused to come in to the party?
What do you think the father wants for his older son?
5. What are the results of the older son's attitudes and actions?
6. What was the father's message to the younger son?

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS,
CONT.****LOOK OUT**

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. As the older brother justified his behavior, how do we justify the same attitude today?
2. Adrienne noted that to the Jews, pigs were ceremonially unclean. For a Jew to work with them would have been dishonorable and even forbidden. Perhaps you, or someone you know, hit a rock-bottom moment where you/they found yourself/themselves in a place you/they never imagined you/they would be. What did you/they think and feel in that situation?
3. What do you think about the father giving his younger son his inheritance when he knew his son would most likely misuse it?
4. Adrienne explained that it would have been dishonorable for a man to pick up his robes in run in that culture. Yet the father runs out to meet his son before anyone else could reach him to disown him and cause harm. What might be equivalent in this culture to picking up one's robes and running to meet the prodigal on his way home?
5. The primary reason for the son's return home appears to be his hunger and physical need. What do you think of the fact that what brings us back to God is not necessarily our primary motive for returning to him? Or that God meets us and restores us even when we aren't returning for that purpose?
6. What things are happening in the world today that require forgiveness?

LOOK IN

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. What do you think God's response would be if we asked, "Are you happy about your house, God?"
2. How are we like the younger son?
3. How are we like the older son?
4. How does this story make you feel? Comforted? Frustrated? Both?
5. What barriers stand in your way to being like the father?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What action could you take this week, based on your life group discussion?
2. Ask God who you need to forgive and ask the group to pray for you to have a soft heart?

NOTE: On the following page you will find a set of sermon notes created by Charissa Burns, an artist who calls B4 home. We include them purley for your enjoyment and encouragement, courtesy of Charissa. You can follow her on the 'Gram @charissaburnsstudio

