

September 25, 2022. Compassion Series Part 1

How do we each view others? How do we view one with tattoos? One with a hard, unfriendly exterior? One who has lots of brokenness? Do we judge those as we see with our own eyes? Do they need the same grace as each of us? Do we look down on others? All need and can receive the same grace that Jesus freely gives. Although many of these outwardly unpolished individuals are judged by people in churches. Therefore, they tend to stay away. Jesus deals with this in the book of Luke.

Luke 15:1-2 *Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."* These religious leaders were given laws and boundaries for living and they enforced and taught these rules. Jesus entertains the types of people who weren't concerned with these laws. Tax collectors were mostly very immoral as they built their own wealth and kept extra money beyond taxes. Jesus was eating with them - not acceptable for a Jew to do.

The first parable taught by Jesus is about the one sheep being lost. He leaves the 99 and rescues the one. He then calls for a celebration. **Luke 15:3-7**

The second parable is about the lost coin. A woman searches and searches until it is found. When found, she calls for a celebration. **Luke 15:8-10**

The third parable is about the prodigal son. **Luke 15:11- 24**

The turning point was compassion in **verse 20**... *So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.* In Exodus, wayward Israel found compassion from God. Compassion is recognizing the suffering of others and taking action to help - it's a sympathetic consciousness of another's distress with a desire to alleviate the distress. Compassion doesn't stop at feeling bad. Compassion is doing something about the distress.

"Prodigal" is used for someone gone wayward. It really means to squander or waste what you have been given. In this Jewish honor-shame culture, the younger son does not honor his father and demands the father gives him his portion. He squanders all he gained with loose-living and became impoverished and broken. No Jew would ever care for (unclean) pigs. This young son falls to the bottom. From the Pharisees view, this son is defiled in many ways and got what he deserved.

The son comes to his senses and goes back to the father in repentance. Jewish repentance was a process to earn back what was lost through work. The son is presenting what is required in this story, willing to work as a hired hand for his father. Until now, Jesus' parable is following Jewish law.

Verse 20 makes a turn to compassion. Compassion directed the father's next steps. The father ran to the son (unconventional to run), picked his robe up (shameful for legs to be seen), and embraced his son. The father ignores the words of his son and calls for the best robe, his signet ring (a sign of the authority of the home), and sandals (servants didn't wear shoes). In this story, Jesus shows the compassion of the father to cover the son's sin. This father had the right to stone his son to death but gave him his own sonship back. This is scandalous for that time.

Some of us see ourselves in the rescue, receiving Jesus' mercy and grace. **Luke 15:25-32** *“Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’ But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’”*

The older son had done everything right, but he was just as lost only having the appearance of doing it all right. Compare these:

- The younger son was concerned with worldly things, considered himself insufficient for salvation because of what he had done, considered himself not good enough.
- The older son was concerned about doing the right things outwardly, considered himself deserving salvation for what he had done, considered himself plenty good enough.

Legalists don't believe in grace or compassion. Hypocrites hang around the church doing what is right with no relationship with the Father. **Matthew 23:27** *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.”*

Some of us think we are less in need of complete and total redemption and grace compared to another. Looking at others as more in need than ourselves makes us less desperate for God and leads to judging others harshly.

Do we see ourselves judging other's immoral lives based on our goodness? Do we expect God to bless us more because of what we have done? Can you see that we are in the same need of God's mercy?

The father moves to each son in this parable. The father pursues both. The father came alongside the older son - met him where he was at. This conflict ends without a conclusion. Every Pharisee and scribe knew that Jesus was talking to them. Everyone can write their own story - to neglect the grace and compassion offered, to see their own fault, to be in need of compassion, or watching God move in other's lives. We are not called to look like either brother but to look like Jesus - grace-filled, compassionate, merciful.

Have you accepted what Jesus offers to us? His grace, His compassion, and His mercy?

What areas do you find yourself like the older brother?

What areas do you find yourself like the younger brother?

How can you move toward others as the father moved toward each son?

Can you relate to the person Pastor James talked about who doesn't want to go to church for being judged? In what way?