

Video: Confession

I have entitled this message Confessions. This message was sparked from a book I read called The Prodigal God by Timothy Keller. The Bible tells us in:

James 5:16,

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (NIV)

It is so easy to confess our sins to God, we are less likely to confess our sins to one another. The Bible tells us it is a good thing. We are not going to build confessionals in the prayer room. However, it is good to have someone you can confide in. There are religions and denominations that still practice confession to a religious leader. We do not require people to do that here. However, I am going to share with you some confessions of a younger and older brother. Some of you may be able to relate to some if not all of what I am confessing. I will be honest, at times I have struggled with what I am about to share with you.

Confessions of a Younger Brother:

Self-indulgence - It is all about me

If it feels good do it.

I break the rules or they don't apply to me

I'm not very wise with my finances – impulsive

I don't think about how my actions affect others, or I do and don't care

Confessions of an Older Brother:

I have a hard time responding to criticism.

I loathe people who are lazy in my eyes.

I find it hard to forgive

I'm angry when life goes wrong

I find it hard to pray

If you were able to relate to any of those then you are in the right place. We are going to talk about how to overcome these struggles. I find that in order to overcome struggles, it helps to go back to the beginning. Let's go all the way back to what God intended our relationships to be.

Genesis 2:25

“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

They were both completely open and vulnerable before the Lord, but there was no shame. It tells us in Genesis 3 that God was walking in the garden in the cool of the day looking to spend time with Adam and Eve. So we were intended to have unashamed relationship with the Lord.

Did you know that is still the relationship God wants with us? It is still possible to go back to this relationship with God. Now I'm not talking about us walking around here naked, so calm down. However there is a way to stand before the Lord unashamed. That is only through Jesus Christ. God, still wants a relationship with each of us. He still wants to walk with us in the cool of the garden. Our Father, has made a way for us to be close to Him.

The problem is many of us don't feel that close to Him. We feel spiritually dead inside because of some of our struggles. We are going to look at the struggles of the young man first.

Before we get started, it is important to know who was around Jesus when He spoke this parable.

Luke 15:1-3

¹ Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³ So He spoke this parable to them,

We see tax collectors and sinners around Jesus. We also see Pharisees and scribes or religious leaders around Jesus.

Luke 15:11

¹¹ Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. ¹³ And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

We are introduced to a man and his two sons. We observe the younger son first. The younger son is a picture of those people around Jesus who are lost. The father is a picture of our heavenly father. The younger son does not want the father, he wants his stuff. He is purposefully alienating himself from the father.

This is what the son is really saying. Dad, I wish you were dead.

Luke 15:12 (NLT)

“¹² The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’

Here is an interesting fact about the father. In that culture, wishing your father dead was not a way to live long yourself.

Deut 21:18-21

¹⁸ “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, ¹⁹ then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. ²⁰ And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.’ ²¹ Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear.”

As you can see, it was serious when you disrespected and rebelled against your parents. I know some of you are thinking we need to reinstate that law.

The father's reaction would be surprising to the people in that culture. He obeyed and then let him go. The younger brother would receive 1/3 of his father's estate and the older 2/3rd since it was the older brother's responsibility to keep the family going.

The father has had this same reaction since the beginning. He told Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree but they did. He will let us screw up. He does not force himself on us.

The younger brother asks for his share, and takes off then wasted his possessions in prodigal living. Encarta Dictionary defines prodigal as extravagantly wasteful. KJV says riotous which is unrestrained. He did everything his heart desired. He had it all, parties, women, food, and nice place. He spent it all on anything he desired. Living it up as people might say today.

Luke 15

¹⁴ But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

Because of his prodigal living, he ran out of money. A famine arises in the land and he ends up cleaning after the pigs. In that culture, pigs were unclean. The people would have caught the end of prodigal living. You end up feeding pigs, which is utterly disgraceful! It was so bad that he wanted to eat the slop that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

That is the end for people who struggle with prodigal living. Many of you know who have lived that life know what I am talking about. That is exactly how we end up, disgraced and alone. However, look what happens.

Luke 15

¹⁷ *“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!’¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’”*

The younger son, came to himself. He remembered how his father. He remembered how his father took care of his hired servants. He remembered the kindness of his father. So he comes up with a plan. He is going to return to his father and admit his sin, and willing to become his hired servant. Notice how it does not say slave, it says hired servant. A hired man had house and would go to work everyday. He was a servant because he had a debt to pay. His plan was to return, work for the father, and pay him back.

How many of us have had that plan with the Lord. I have sinned, but I promise to make it right. I am going to read the Bible every day forever. Let us see the father reaction.

Luke 15

²⁰ *“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’*

²² *“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring^[b] out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.²³ And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.*

How does the father respond to the younger son? I think The Message can bring a little clarity here. The father is compassionate, embraces his son, and does not care about his plan.

²⁰⁻²¹"When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

²²⁻²⁴"But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, ...

How does the father respond to his speech? He would have nothing to do with it. He didn't even listen. When the father saw him, the father went to him, embraced and kissed him. The father put the best robe on his son, rings and sandals. He wanted a feast proclaimed, the fatted calf was killed and everyone was invited to make merry. For his son was dead, he was lost, now he has been found and is alive.

Is this the rut you find yourself in, living for yourself and not really thinking about anything else, then you need to take some advice from this young man.

Overcoming struggles as a young man:

1. Remember your father in heaven, remember how he treated you, or look at how he treats his servants
2. Repent of your sin
3. Return to him, and be the person he called you to be.

Do you notice what happens? This harkens back to what Jesus said with the first two parables of Luke 15. Let's read them.

Luke 15:4-10

⁴ "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he

finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

⁸ "Or what woman, having ten silver coins,^[a] if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' ¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The point is, there is much rejoicing in heaven over one who repents. The son has repented and returned. He did not return on his own term. God does not care about our terms. He is accepted by his father. His father is compassionate and merciful. He steps in.

What happens to the son, if the father is not merciful? The son dies for what he did to his father (sin). The father accepts him as his own, kisses him, cleans him up and makes merry with him. Has he not done the same for us? God does not come to us on our terms but his. We are saved by grace through faith, and not any plan of our own. He just loves us.

Let's look at the second son now.

Luke 15

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'

²⁸ "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a

young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ *But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'* ³¹ *“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.’* ³² *It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’”*

Here is the shocking part of the story. Let's look back at...

Luke 15:1-3

¹ *Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.* ² *And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”* ³ *So He spoke this parable to them,*

SO who was Jesus addressing in this parable? People who are lost, or people who are religious? He addresses it to the religious leaders. This makes the whole focus of the parable change. The religious leaders were having a problem with who Jesus was spending his time with. Their mindset was not in tune with the Lord even though they did everything right. This parable speaks directly to them. Jesus is talking right to their spiritual deadness.

The older brother is returning home from a hard day's work. Here hears the commotion and questions a servant about it. When he hears, his reaction is quite different from his fathers. “He was angry and would not go in.”

Understand, this is the greatest day in the fathers life, his dead son has returned. His oldest would not come in. The older son thought he was better than the younger. He says, I stayed, I served, I was good and did everything right.

The truth of the matter is, the father had to go out to both the younger and the older. All of a sudden we begin to see that the older brother didn't want the father either. He was not looking to make his father happy. He was looking out for himself. He is also alienated from the father and does not love the father. He just wants his stuff much like the younger

brother, but tried to accomplish it by being good. He tried to get what he wanted by being good.

DO you see the point Jesus is making? Both the good and the bad are alienated from the father's heart. They both don't love the father. They are both selfish. The older brother just relies on religion and his standing is based on performance before the Lord.

Let me explain the Confessions of the older brother to you:

DO you see now why an older brother has a hard time responding to criticism? He feels like it is an attack against him and it depresses him. There standing before God is based on how good they are. When someone criticizes them, their standing with God is affected.

I loathe people who are lazy in my eyes and not doing as much as me,

I find it hard to forgive because deep down, they I think I am better than others. I stayed, I do what is right.

I'm angry when life goes wrong because I believe God owes me because I have lived a good life.

I find it hard to pray and no longer feel intimacy in my relationship with Christ. It is all about works.

Everything is based on their actions. They believe God has to let them in because they are good people. These are the people who are at church all the time, but are never happy. For them Jesus is more of an inspiration and not a savior. They really only obey to get things.

What is interesting is the ending. Jesus does not tell us if the religious older son enter into the party. It actually gives me an impression that he does not. In the end it looks like the bad boy is saved and the good one is lost because of his own righteousness.

Praise God for the warning he has given us in this parable. We experience spiritual deadness because of our goodness.

How do you overcome this? To overcome the older brother is to repent from the reasons why you do the good you do. Is it to gain God's favor, then that is the wrong reason. We already have his favor. That leads me to the third part of the story.

There is a third part to this story; it was the older brothers responsibility to keep the family together. A true older brother would have gone to his father when his younger brother went away and said, "I will bring him back." Did you notice that was the difference in the parables, in the first two, someone looked for what was lost. No one did so in the third. It was suppose to happen, but the older brother refused.

Then when the brother did return home, who did it cost to clothe him? Not the father, it was the older brother, because that is all his stuff now. The younger brother was accepted freely by God, but it cost something, it cost the older brother his finest robe and his finest meal.

Salvation is freely given, but it did cost something. It cost Jesus his life. Jesus is a picture of what an elder brother should be. Jesus came to earth looking to save the lost. He goes after the prodigals. He is the true elder brother.

What he offers to us is something different. The gospel is like nothing else in the world today. Religion says that I obey therefore I am accepted by God, but the gospel says I am accepted by God therefore I obey. The gospel was never about being a good person. The gospel is good news because it has nothing to do with me, and everything to do with what God has done to save me. The elder brother, Jesus Christ came down, found me, and clothed me in his robes of righteousness.

We remember that in communion today.