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You Matter To God

LUKE 15:11-24

Introduction

1. What are you worth?
2. Many of you at one time or another have gone to a bank to borrow money.
3. In the process of filling out the application for your loan you had to list your assets and liabilities.
4. The bank then uses these two figures, your assets and your liabilities, to determine your net worth.
 - a. They do it by subtracting your liabilities from your assets.
 - b. To put it another way, what you own minus what you owe is your net worth.
5. Let me ask this question another way — What are you worth to your husband, wife, parents, children?
6. Let's take it one step further — What are you worth to God?

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7. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His listeners, “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6:26, ESV).
8. Over three months ago, on the Sunday before we started our door knocking campaign, we looked at two parables in which Jesus responded to the complaints of the Pharisees and the scribes that He received sinners and ate with them.
 - a. His first parable was of a shepherd who lost one of his one hundred sheep and left the ninety-nine in the open pasture to go searching for the one which was lost until he found it.
 - b. His second parable was of a woman who had ten silver coins but lost one. She lit a lamp and swept the floor of her house carefully searching for the lost coin until she found it.

9. Each parable emphasized the value of the one.
10. As Jesus stated in His conclusion of the lost coin, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).
11. This morning, I would like for us to examine the third parable which Jesus tells in response to their complaint.
12. It is a parable of the younger of two sons who demands his portion of the estate so that he can leave home and go do what he wants.
13. It is a parable about each of us and our own separation from God.
14. As we walk through this parable I believe that each of us will see little glimpses of ourselves.
15. More than that, however, I hope each of us will see the powerful portrait which Jesus paints of His Father and the love He has for each of us.

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I. The Son's Separation

A. SICK OF HOME

“And He said, “A man had two sons. “The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them.” (Luke 15:11–12, NASB95)

1. Jesus tells a parable of a wealthy land owner with two sons.
2. The younger of the two sons is probably in his late teens because he is still single.
3. This young man was sick of home. Perhaps he was tired of being told what to do by his older brother.
4. He wanted to get away, be his own man.
5. He wanted to go to a place where he could do what he wanted to do, get up when he wanted to get up, go where he wanted to go.
6. The father knew it was useless to argue with his son any longer.
7. He gave him his portion of the estate even though he knew what he would do with it.

8. Perhaps, many of us would have taken the father aside and tried to discourage him from such a decision.
9. However, the father knew this was the only way his son would listen, if he ever would.

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“And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.” (Luke 15:13, NASB95)

1. We can only imagine how the young son spent his newly acquired wealth. New clothes? The best places to stay, the choicest foods, finest wine?
2. No doubt, it was amazing to him how many friends he suddenly had.
3. Everyone wanted to be around him, ride in his chariot, go where he went, do what he did.
4. Of course, he always picked up the tab.
5. Eventually he found the thrills didn't excite as they did at first.
6. Thoughts of home would come to mind, but only for the moment.

Slide 5**C. THE DESTITUTION**

“Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.” (Luke 15:14, NASB95)

1. Eventually the money ran out and so did the so called friends.
2. To make matters worse, a famine struck the land — there were no crops and food was scarce.
3. His world began to collapse around him.
4. He was suffering in a distant land with no money and no family.
5. There was nowhere to turn. What was he going to do?
6. He knew how to work. He had learned that at home. So, he went looking for a job.

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7. However, everyone else was looking for a job as well and, because of the famine, no jobs were to be found, except one.

“So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.” (Luke 15:15, NASB95)

8. He hired himself out as the servant of a Gentile — a day laborer.

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9. He was sent out to feed the pigs, something which no respectable descendant of Abraham would ever do (Leviticus 11:7; Deuteronomy 14:8; Isaiah 65:4; 66:17).

“And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.” (Luke 15:16, NASB95)

10. He didn't even make enough money to feed himself.
11. A few months earlier he had all the food he could ever want to eat, and more friends than he could count.
12. Now, all his “friends” were gone.
13. No one cared about his predicament or that he had nothing to eat.

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II. The Son's Return

A. SICK FOR HOME

“But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!’” (Luke 15:17, NASB95)

1. Where he had been sick of home, this young man was now sick for home.
2. The change came not just because he was in a miserable place, but because . . .
 - a. of his memories of home (it wasn't as bad as he declared it to be).
 - b. he longed to be with his father
 - c. it was better to be a servant of his father than to be where he was.
 - 1) They “have more than enough.”

2) He, on the other hand, was “dying . . . with hunger.”

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B. THE TURNING POINT

“I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.” ” (Luke 15:18–19, NASB95)

1. This young man reached the turning point in his life.
 - a. Once, he would have gone any other place than home.
 - b. Now, there is no place he would rather go than home.
2. He decided that he would acknowledge his sin before God and his father.
 - a. Pride no longer got in the way.
 - b. His spirit was now broken and in his heart he felt remorse at the way he had treated his father.
3. He chose to act quickly and humbly.
4. He would openly confess his failure to his father and cast himself on his father’s mercy.
5. He would assert no rights because he knew deep down that he was unworthy to be received back as a member of the family.
6. The only request he would make was the daily care and sustenance of a day laborer.
7. He would accept the consequences of his choices.
 - ❑ This is what repentance looks like. We make no claims, assert no rights. We confess our failures and cast ourselves upon our Father’s mercy.

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III. The Father’s Response

A. COMPASSION

“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. “And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I

am no longer worthy to be called your son.” (Luke 15:20–21, NASB95)

1. He had resolved to go to his father, but resolving to do something is not the same as doing it.
2. This young man acted on his resolution — we must do the same.
3. His father saw him “while he was still a long way off” (v. 20).
 - a. For how many days, weeks, months, possibly even years had the father looked down the road hoping to see his son coming home.
 - b. Was it the first thing he did every morning and the last thing he did before retiring for the evening?
4. Jesus tells us that when his father saw him he “felt compassion for him” (v. 20).
 - a. When he left home he no doubt did so in fine clothes with a air about him of one who is going out to take on the world.
 - b. Now, he returned in stained clothes which reeked of a pig sty, his head is bowed in shame, his walk is much slower.
5. His father did not take the attitude, “I knew this would happen. I knew he would finally see it my way. I will wait here and see what he has to say for himself.”
6. No. This man abandoned all sense of propriety and “ran” to meet his son.
7. When he reached his son, “he threw his arms around him” and greeted him with a fatherly kiss of affection.
8. He accepted his son before his son spoke a word.
9. His son then spoke the words he had rehearsed time and again as he made his way home: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (v. 21, NIV84).
 - ❑ In telling of the father’s compassionate response toward his son, Jesus is pointing us to God. He wants us to know that all who come humbly to God will be warmly received by him.

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B. RESTORATION

“But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on

him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;" (Luke 15:22, NASB95)

1. The father didn't allow his son to finish what he was saying.
2. He immediately turned to his servants and said, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;" (Luke 15:22, NASB95)
3. This young man's father receives his son back with full privileges:
 - a. "The best robe" — nothing but the best would do for his son.
 - b. "Put a ring on his hand" — possibly a ring with the family seal upon it identifying him as a member of the family.
 - c. "Sandals on his feet" — he may have been barefooted when he came home. No more.
4. In a matter of minutes this young man went from destitution to restoration.
 - ❑ This is what God does for each of us when we come home. He removes from us the rags of sin and clothes us with robes of righteousness. He immediately welcomes us into His family.

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C. CELEBRATION

"and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;" (Luke 15:23, NASB95)

1. The father calls for a celebration in honor of his son's return.
2. They will eat the fattened calf which they typically reserved for the religious holidays.
3. Today, they had true reason to rejoice.
4. As the father said,

"for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." (Luke 15:24, NASB95)
5. Don't you know there was rejoicing in that home which hadn't been seen in a long time.

Conclusion

1. As you reflect upon this parable, remember, Jesus is telling us of God's response to each of us when we come home.

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2. At the end of His parable concerning the lost sheep, He added this commentary about the celebration after the sheep had been found:

"I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7, NASB95).

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3. In 1892, at the age of 54, William J. Kirkpatrick wrote these words to a hymn which we often sing which not only reflect upon the possible thoughts of this younger son, but also our own as well:

**I've wandered far away from God,
Now I'm coming home;
The paths of sin too long I've trod,
Lord, I'm coming home.**

Refrain:

**Coming home, coming home,
Nevermore to roam,
Open wide Thine arms of love,
Lord, I'm coming home.**

4. Are you a person who has wasted precious years away from God?
5. Is your soul sick and tired of sin?
6. Why not turn away from your sin and come home today?
7. Let God wash away the stain of your sin with the blood of His son and clothe you in garments of righteousness.