

We are NOT the Older Brother

As we are a body of believers, whose mission from Christ is to love each other...this is the only way that the world will know that we are his disciples.

Not how good we hold up a standard...how well we enforce “rules”...but how we LOVE one another.

Are there standards? Yes...do we all meet them? Absolutely not, all have fallen short. But the grace that is extended to us, is the same grace we are to extend to one another.

If we are not careful, we can find ourselves in a category that Jesus spoke many times about in various parables...

Luke 15: 25-31

The older brother had been in the Father's house the entire time of the unfortunate incident with his younger brother.

The older brother had to have heard the tears the Father cried and his longing for the lost son to be returned.

We never hear of the brother consoling his father...volunteering to go look for his younger brother.

First, we see that when the younger son returns and has the exchange with the Father, the older brother is in the field...meaning he was doing what he always does, working and being faithful. Which is a good thing to do, however Jesus mentions this b/c it's not just what we do, but the motivation from which we do things.

Second, all we hear from the older is him complaining that the standard is being lowered...you're allowing this younger brother to be a part of this party. "THIS SON OF YOURS" ...Not even this brother of MINE...

The older brother's problem with the dad was the party...it wasn't the acceptance of the son, I'm sure he loved his brother...BUT YOU, Dad, you're gonna spend money???

-Killing a fattened calf had a symbolic meaning: lavish grace, joyous celebration, and God's abundant love and forgiveness for those who repent. The act of killing and feasting on a fatted calf was a display of wealth, generosity, and the importance of the occasion.

You're throwing away money (and some of it was his remember...the rest of the inheritance was partially his), this extravagant party? Kill fattened calf...

Jesus' response? Yes, I am throwing a party for this wayward son. And it's not the same expectation that I have for you the older. I'm holding you to a different standard. You must lead, you must love, you must celebrate, this is what you've been called to.

Those who have come to Christ and confessed him as Lord, are free to be a part of the party. Joining in to help to make the party amazing is the right of

every single person who comes to the Father's house.

The Father knows what the struggles and the shortcomings of all of his kids...he didn't need the older brother to point out the crazy things the younger had been involved in...sure he heard it from many rumors, but yet he COVERED the younger with love, forgiveness, identity and purpose. That's the Father's job...

The older brother's resentment serves as a warning against the dangers of self-righteousness, which can hinder one's ability to rejoice in God's grace and extend it to others.

The dad tries to deal with the older brother's heart, and his lack of love for his brother. Son says,"(Vs. 29tpt) Look for 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 may celebrate with my friends"

Meeting obligations to God and others is generally a good thing. God issues commands to His people,

and it is always best to obey God. But the heart of God's commands is to love Him and to love people by seeking their best. We seek our best when we trust God and follow His ways. But legalism does not obey God. Rather, it follows rules. And the Pharisees followed their set of rules. They did not follow God, much less love Him. And this is who this story is for...Jesus had to challenge their heart.

The Father's appeal to the older brother is an invitation to share in God's joy over the repentance of sinners, embracing a spirit of compassion and forgiveness.

Lessons to learn from the older brother:

Pride and Self-Righteousness:

The older brother's focus on his own "goodness" and his resentment towards his brother's perceived "evil" demonstrates a prideful attitude. He believed he deserved better treatment than his brother, failing to recognize his own need for grace.

Lack of Compassion:

Instead of rejoicing with his father at his brother's return, the older brother is consumed with anger and bitterness. This reveals a lack of compassion and a failure to understand the Father's heart of love and forgiveness for all His children.

Misunderstanding Grace:

The older brother's perspective is rooted in a works-based righteousness. He believes he has earned his place through his obedience, and therefore, resents the undeserved grace given to his brother. This highlights the importance of recognizing that salvation is a gift, not a reward earned through our own efforts. **Mt. 20:1-16**

The Father's Heart:

The parable also emphasizes the Father's boundless love and mercy, which extends to both sons. While the younger son experiences a dramatic turnaround, the older son's journey also involves a call to repentance and a return to the Father's heart of love.

Importance of Forgiveness:

The older brother's unforgiving spirit demonstrates the importance of extending forgiveness to others, even when they have wronged us. The parable encourages believers to rejoice in the repentance of others and to welcome them back with open arms.