

Come to the Table Sermon Series – Week 6

Reconciliation at the Table

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Sermon Preached: Sunday 20th July 2025

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Location: St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton

Sermon Text: [Luke 15:1-2,11-32](#)

Good morning everyone. Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today we're focusing on the gospel lesson, the prodigal son, as we continue our series of Come to the Table.

And we're looking at it this morning from the perspective of forgiveness and reconciliation as we dig into this parable. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for bringing us all here this morning.

Thank you for the day that you've created. Thank you for leading me on this journey over the last couple of weeks as I prepared the message for today. And I just pray that your Holy Spirit would rest on me and use me as your vessel to speak your word to these people and pray that you would give them ears to hear it.

Help us to learn more about your love and about how we can show that love to those people around us. Amen. So today's message is a parable of the prodigal son.

It's interesting why names for different parables are chosen and this one is known in the Bible as a prodigal son, but probably a better name I think for it would be actually a parable of the father's love for his children. And many of you have heard this parable many times before, I know I have, and we've heard it preached from all sorts of different angles. But if you're new to it, it's a story of about a father's love for his children.

And how great his love is that he actually gives his children the free choice, free choice to stay with him and to be a part of his home and his household, or to take an inheritance and go and use it as this child wanted to. And so his younger son took his inheritance money and went off and lived what he thought was a joyful life of celebrating and spending his money on frivolous living, on prostitutes, and all sorts of things. And he used up all his inheritance in the end, came to an end, and he had no more.

And that's when the famine came across the land and he goes, oh, what am I going to do? So he had no choice but to go and find work. And we hear in the parable that the person we worked for, didn't even give him any food. So he had to go and eat the food of the pigs.

And working with the pigs in Old Testament times, of course we know that pigs were an unclean animal. And so it would have been some of the worst work that he could possibly do, is to have to go and work with pigs and eat their food. And then sport into his senses.

And he said, well, even the servants at my father's house are better off than what I am. At least I get a full tummy and they're looked after and cared for. And so then he came back to

his father and his father, in his father's love, who was looking out for him, saw him coming, and he welcomed him home and forgave him, and threw a great feast for him.

And then we hear about his older brother, who had seen how he had wasted his father's, or wasted his inheritance, and he couldn't understand that his father could welcome him back. And he had to be shown how his father loved him so much, or how he loved both sons, and that even though his other son had been a sinner, that he welcomed him back. My question for you this morning, firstly, is who do you relate to in the story? And why do you relate to that person? Do you relate to the younger son? Do you have a time in your life where you turned your back on our Heavenly Father and went your own way? Perhaps you're still there.

Perhaps you saw the errors of your ways and turned around and came back, came back and asked for forgiveness. Do you relate to the loving father who loves his children, but has seen his children go away and turn his back on him, turn his back on their faith, and go and do other things? Do you relate to the older brother who can't recognise the father's love for his children, and why or how he can forgive those sins of his brother? As I said, we've heard this parable from many perspectives. Heard this parable from the perspective of the loving father, from the perspective of the prodigal son, and from the perspective of the older brother.

But today I thought maybe we take a slightly different direction and have a look at this parable from the perspective of the servants. Until you actually focus in on the parable, you don't really realise how much the servants are mentioned throughout the story. You think they're just taking a back seat, but they're actually actively involved all the way through.

They watch as the story unfolds from the beginning right through to the end. They're there faithfully serving their master. They're not a family member, but they're included like one.

They're invited to the feast to be a part of it, and they see firsthand the father's love and grace for his sons and his whole family. So we can look closer at these servants, these servants who made the reconciliation feast possible. And as we look at this story and how it unfolds, we see that at the very start, Jesus is there ministering to the lost and the forsaken, the tax collectors and the sinners.

And the Pharisees are there watching this and seeing Jesus with these people. And for them, this isn't right because he's with sinners, he's with the unclean. They're the ones who are in the right, who are doing the right thing, who are living the way God commanded them to.

But Jesus is here with these people who he shouldn't be with. So when Jesus hears them talking about this, he presents to them three parables. And in our reading today, we only heard about the one, the parable of the lost son or the father's love, but there's actually three parables.

If you go home and have a read through that tonight or this week, you'll see there are three parables. There's the lost sheep, the lost coin, and then the lost son. And Jesus uses these three parables to build the story.

And I could preach a whole sermon on this one slide from many different angles, but I'd encourage you just to go home and just dwell on some of this in the coming week. And that's about how initially in the first parable, there's only one sheep in a hundred, and then we have one coin in ten, and then we have one in two brothers. And as Jesus builds a parable, we hear firstly in the sheep is found as a celebration that goes on.

But then in the final parable, as Jesus builds, it talks not about just about the lost, focusing on the lost part, but it focuses on the whole family, the relationships, the relationship between the father, the sons, and the servants as well. And then in that final parable, in the first two parables, we hear that they finish up with a celebration, but the final parable, it finishes up with a feast where everyone is involved. As we look at this parable, we often skip over the servants, and we don't realize just how integral part they are of this story.

And being a servant is a big part of what Jesus calls us to be. In Mark chapter 9 verse 35, we read that Jesus says, anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all. And then in Mark chapter 10 verses 42 to 46, we read, whoever wants to be first, whoever wants to be great, must humble themselves, becoming a slave of all.

Jesus didn't come to be served, he came to serve. And we can see this in his greatest service of all when he gave his life for us. And as servants, the master provides us everything we need to serve him, the gifts and talents that he's given each one of us.

So we'll see how he wants to use these as a special part of his reconciliation feast. As we said, the servants were there all the way through this story. Right at the beginning, they were sore when the father gave his sons the free choice, choice to stay with him or to take the inheritance and do what they wished.

How many of you have had your parents there here, or grandparents have had children come up to you and ask you for money? What's the first thing that you say to them when they do that? What are you going to do with that? What do you want that for? Go and spend it on something frivolous, on buying lollies or some sort of knick-knack, or you're going to spend it on something wise, like a book or something. But no, we don't hear that in our story today from our father, from the father. He gives the inheritance to his son without any question.

He gives him the free choice to use it, as he would will. In the Old Testament times, servants were actually considered a part of the family. Even though they didn't explicitly have rights, the same as family members, they were still considered a part of the family.

So we can see how the servants, as the father grieved the loss of his son, he'd gone away. We can see how the servants would have sat around in comfort of their master. They would have been there to listen as he poured his heart out.

How much it hurt to see his son gone, as he grieved for his lost son. And as the father waited and watched expectantly for his son returned, they would have been there by his side. Maybe they wondered, is he wasting his time? Why doesn't he just give up? And then as they saw their master look out and see his son returning, they would have seen the excitement in his face, the joy as he got up and ran, the joy as he spotted his son and as he got up and ran to greet him, they would have ran with their master to greet the son.

And we know that because when the father turned to the, welcomed the son and turned to the servant and said, go, he turned to the servant and said, go and fetch my robe, my finest robe and a ring and put it on my son's finger, the servants were right there to run and get that robe. And it wasn't the father who dressed the son, it was the servants who came and dressed the son and put the ring on his finger to welcome him home. And then we also know as the servants, as the master said, go, kill a fatted calf and prepare a banquet so we may celebrate.

Wasn't talking about just celebration with him and his son so that everyone may celebrate the servants as well, the whole household will celebrate and welcome the son to come home. And then as the eldest son came home to the banquet and wondered what was going on, it was the servants that he called to find out. It was the servant.

Well, when the servant told him that what was going on and the eldest son couldn't go in to face his father or his brother, it was the servant that acted as an intermediary between the father and the eldest son. Maybe that servant even saw some of himself in the older brother and the resentment for how the son had heard his father and how he had squandered his inheritance. Maybe he'd got past this as he saw the father's love of that younger son.

Being a servant can be tough. Seemingly at the master's beck and call. Maybe, maybe servants will get chastised eyes by disgruntled siblings.

There's many jobs to do. Cleaning and preparation for the feast, killing the fat and calf, preparing the food and cleaning up afterwards as well too. It can be pretty tiring.

In Mark chapter 9 verse 35 we read, again anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all. What does Jesus mean when he's saying this? In Philippians chapter 2 verse 6 and 7 we read this about Jesus, who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used for his own advantage. Rather he made himself nothing, taking on the nature of a very servant, the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness.

Jesus wants us to show love to people. He wants us to help people. He wants us to be part of the reconciliation process.

How are you feeling as a servant? Are you feeling overwhelmed? Undervalued? Overworked? Inadequate? In Luke chapter 12 verse 37 we read, it will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready to serve when he comes. Truly I tell you he will dress himself to serve. He the master will dress himself to serve and will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.

It's pretty amazing isn't it? The master will come and wait on us the servants. I guess we can see a bit of that. We can see that when Jesus went and washed his disciples feet, the master waiting on the servants.

I was pondering this this morning and it's even more than this because as servants we are God's hands and feet and so as we serve others it's as if God is serving those people as well

too. In this parable we truly witness the father's love for his children and also for his servants. They're included like part of the family and the father has also made sure that he doesn't only have one servant, he has many servants each with their own gifts and talents to serve in their own special way.

He's not a hard taskmaster like the sinners are in the foreign country who made it hard for his lost son. We need to be ready to play our role, to join in with the table of reconciliation where the love and generosity of the father is shown to the whole household, where it's displayed in the sacrifice of the fattened calf and in some ways there's some parallels to that with Jesus as well too being God's sacrifice for us. So my question for you today is how are you called to being a servant in the meal of reconciliation? Is it buying someone a coffee and having a chat, listening to them pour their heart out to you? Is it talking to someone you don't know after church? Is it opening your home to others to have a meal, to share a meal or supporting someone else to do this? Or is it as simple as giving someone a cup of cold water on a hot date? Through this parable Jesus showed how the father welcomed the unwelcome to the table of reconciliation.

His servants and you and I play a big part in that. There are many servants, we're not on our own, we each need to do our part to serve the master to bring reconciliation to his family and the thought that I want to leave you with today is how can you be a reconciliation servant and welcome the unwelcome? Father God, we thank you for giving us these words, for planting them in our hearts. Help us, guide us, lead us in the coming days and weeks to meditate on these words and to see how they fit into our life, helping us to be servants, to be in your hands and feet to those people around us.

Amen.