

Sermon Title: The 4th Principle of Heavenly Party Planning

Sermon Text: Luke 15:25-32

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to understand the need for the religious self-righteous hypocrite to repent.

Sermon Proposition: There are 3 key truths about the father's reception of religious self-righteous hypocrites.

Introduction: It is important in understanding this story, we've been investigating, to understand that this audience of people were very sensitive to the idea of honor and shame. Your whole life was consumed with sustaining your own honor, or to achieve your own honor, because that's what was so important. It was very, very important to be an honorable person, it was a works/righteousness system. You had to earn your way into favor with God by living good and being religious and moral, by keeping the standards, walking the line, dotting all the I's and crossing all the T's in terms of the standard for behavior in the community. The Pharisees, believed themselves to be honorable, they were the leaders of Jewish religion. They believed they were the standard and architects of what honor was and they also were the definers of what shame was.

They had concluded that Jesus was a shameful false Messiah, that He was in fact not of God at all, but actually of Satan.

He attracted the worst people of society, the outcast, the scum, the nobodies, the lowlife, those who had been excommunicated from the synagogue, the socially untouchable. People the Pharisees wouldn't dare go near, lest their supposed purity be polluted.

The third story is really the main story. It deals with the problem of salvation being found in the legalistic system of Judaism, and in any other legalistic system in the world and all religions are a form of works/salvation except true Christianity, they are all the same system. In the system good people go to heaven, people who are religious and do good things go to heaven and if you do them long enough and well enough, that's going to be how you get to God. But in God's system, the glory of salvation is that God forgives the one who asks and who repents without any works. Why does the father do this? Because it gives him joy!!

I. The shameful reaction. V.25-30

Most people would say the older son, he is the Christian, the good son. He stayed home doing what a good Christian son should. But that's not true. Remember the Pharisees are listening, everything up to now has been shamefully embarrassing. Now for them here comes somebody who will do what's right, the honorable thing. This is their joy. This is them!!

The older son is the primary party planner in the family, when it comes to honoring the father. But the father never sends for the older son. Why? Because he has no relationship to the father. Being in the field is sort of a metaphor for where he was in terms of the family. The younger son was in a far country, the older son was in a far field. But the symbolism demonstrates they are both far from the father. They both come home but to very different receptions.

The experts of honor and shame having been surprised and shocked up to this point, are about to find someone they like who turns out to be them.

They understand nothing about divine grace, they resent divine grace, they don't understand the loving heart of God. They don't understand His mercy, tenderness, compassion, forgiveness and desire to reconcile with sinners.

The older son, like the Pharisees pretends to stay in the father's house, to be dutiful, to do what the father says, to hang around, to get what he wants, to get approval and affirmation, wealth, land, community prestige. He wants to appear religious, on the outside he upholds all the appearance of external honor.

He comes home and hears the music and dancing, the symphonias and the choras, from which we get symphony, and chorus. It's a party. There's music and in those days the men danced in a circle, men only, and there was clapping and singing. There would be instruments included in the music. The word symphoniasis can be used to refer to voices together. So there are voices, instruments, dancing, it's a celebration. This has been planned by months and months of preparation, and the older son knows nothing about it.

- A. Planned over several months
- B. These are his resources be used.
- C. This is an outrageous act on the part of the father.

In verse 26, servant actually is paidion here and it's from passin the Greek which means a young boy. All the family servants would be inside. They would be taking care of the guest.

In verse 27, this is outrageous conduct, it is more than this older brother can bear. Notice the phrase "safe and sound." The phrase is hugiainoin in the Greek from which we get the word hygiene and it basically means wholeness, well-being. But in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, that word is almost always connected to Shalom, which means "peace." The father has received him back in peace. This is not just good health, this is shalom, this is a peace of a full reconciliation between father and son. That's why there's a party!!

A legalist who thinks you earn your way to heaven doesn't understand that God's joy is found in justifying the ungodly, that God's joy is found in forgiving the sinner who is bankrupt and has nothing.

The son in verse 28, refused to become a part of the party. (**Matthew 23:13** "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in."**14** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation."**15** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."), hypocrites are all sinners on the inside because hypocrisy has no way to constrain the flesh internally. He hated the idea of grace, He resented this mercy and instant reconciliation.

Quote from John MacArthur, "the sinner can choose his category of sin, but he can't choose anything other than sin."

The sinners works may appear good, they may be on a human level good, they help people, they're kind, they relieve peoples suffering, they're charitable, etc.

But they are really sinful when they are done by the unregenerate because they lack purity, and they lack true motive which is the glory of God. And anything not done for the glory of God, is done to the glory of man and that is sin of all sins.

It is really an expression of human pride. It is being done for the well being of the sinner. The problem and danger is this, good works, especially when they manifest in the life of an unregenerate person, they tend to layer the deception so that the person instead of seeing himself as wretched, begins to convince himself by his goodness that he is far better than he really is. The works of sinners may not all be crimes, but they are not without sinfulness because they are done for personal and selfish motives.

3 false concepts of good works of sinners

1. To do good works that you think are good but they're not because they're for yourself.
2. Add to that you proliferate those works which builds up your sense of pride and well-being and feeling of self-satisfaction which increases your pride which makes the sin all the worse.
3. Add to that the illusion that somehow you're gaining favor with God and you have added the ultimately damning sin that somehow you can earn your salvation.

Verse 28 Here the father leaves the festival, goes out and does what you would never expect God to do, beg a sinner, beg a hypocrite. But he is the one who seeks, searches, to save the lost.

Notice the word "entreating." Parakaleo, comes from the noun from paraclete, meaning the Holy Spirit, the one who comes alongside. (**Matthew 19; Luke 18; Philippians 3:6**)

Verse 29 There is a classic illustration of a hypocrite. Angry, bitter, slave mentality, I've done all this to get what I expect to get, but he sees himself as perfect needing no repentance. No one gets into the kingdom of God without repentance.

The outrageousness of hypocrisy and legalism. It demands that God forgives us for a violation of our understanding. He thinks the father needs to ask him for forgiveness.

II. The shameful response. V.31-32

Divine joy is released when one sinner repents and is reconciled. And heaven's joy will be released not just for a prodigal, not just for someone who's immoral and irreligious and blatantly sinful, but for secret sinners, rebels, the religious, the moral, the hypocrites, the ones whose lawlessness is all on the inside. Christ goes out into the street for the prodigal, and the courtyard for you.

III. The shameful resolution. V.33ff