

Summary

This sermon explores the parable of the prodigal son from Luke 15, emphasizing that it's actually a story about a father and two sons, not just one. Pastor Annie F. Downs teaches that Jesus told this story to both religious leaders (Pharisees) and sinners, offering grace and truth to both groups. The younger son represents those who have openly sinned and need to come home, while the older son represents those who follow rules but harbor pride and judgment. The father in the story represents Jesus as the 'Everlasting Father' from Isaiah 9:6, always ready to welcome anyone home. The message connects to Christmas by showing how Jesus left his home in heaven to enter our broken world so we can be at home with God forever.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You today with open hearts, ready to receive what You want to teach us through Your Word. Help us to set aside our preconceptions and pride, and give us humble hearts that are willing to learn and grow. Holy Spirit, speak to each person here today in the way they need to hear from You. Show us how this story applies to our own lives and relationships. We ask that You would use this time together to draw us closer to You and to one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one family tradition or holiday memory that always brings you joy when you think about it?

Key Verses

1. Luke 15:11-32
2. Isaiah 9:6
3. Luke 15:1-2
4. John 1:17

Questions

1. Which son do you relate to more - the younger son who openly rebelled, or the older son who stayed home but harbored resentment? Why?
2. The pastor mentioned that 'no sin is out of reach for any of us.' How does this truth both humble and encourage you?
3. What does it mean to you that the father ran to embrace the younger son before even knowing why he was coming home?
4. How can pride be just as destructive as more obvious sins? Share an example from your own life or observations.
5. The older brother called his sibling 'this son of yours' instead of 'my brother.' How does our language reveal the condition of our hearts?

6. What does it look like practically to 'come to your senses' when you're far from God?
7. The pastor said both sons forgot they were sons and thought love was conditional. How do we sometimes treat God's love as something we have to earn?
8. How does seeing Jesus as the 'Everlasting Father' in this story change your understanding of God's heart toward you?

Life Application

This week, identify someone in your life who needs to 'come to their senses' and commit to praying for them daily. Also, examine your own heart for any 'older brother' attitudes of pride or judgment toward others, and ask God to help you develop a more welcoming, grace-filled perspective toward those who are returning to faith.

Key Takeaways

1. This parable is about a father and two sons, not just one - both sons were lost in different ways
2. No sin is out of reach for any of us, but no one is too far gone to come home to God
3. The father represents Jesus as the 'Everlasting Father' who always welcomes us home with open arms
4. Pride and judgment can cause us to miss God's party just as much as obvious rebellion
5. December 21st (winter solstice) reminds us that it doesn't have to get any darker - the light is coming

Ending Prayer

Father, thank You for this reminder that You are always waiting with open arms for us to come home. Help us to remember that we are Your beloved children, not slaves trying to earn Your love. Forgive us for the times we've been like the older brother, harboring pride and judgment in our hearts. Give us hearts that celebrate when others come home to You, and help us to be people who invite others to experience Your love and grace. As we approach Christmas, may we remember that Jesus left His home in heaven to make a way for us to be at home with You forever. Use us to be part of bringing others to their senses and back to You. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.