

Luke 15 v 8 - 32

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[0 : 0 0] Good. If I could have the children to come and sit on the front, that's the younger children who are either at church or some of the others as well. Okay? For a minute or two. Those who usually come up, lead the way. And then if there's some of you visiting and you want to come up on the front as well, you can come up in the front as well. There's quite a few seats here, so I'll need you in a minute because we're going to do a quiz and then we're going to sing some songs and do a memory verse. No, nobody else wants to come up the front?

Okay, just you guys. Well done. Okay. I'm going to see if I can put those back on there. Right. With technology, there's always something that's going to go wrong, okay? So that's going to be the case. So this isn't quite how I planned it beforehand, but this is a last minute thing.

We're thinking about what we eat at harvest, thinking about what God gives to us, what he provides for us. And of course, he provides those things all sorts of different ways, doesn't he? He provides it not only through the farmers who grow, the fishermen who fish, but he also provides it through the shops we buy at and the supermarkets and the places we eat as well.

So we've got a memory verse behind here, behind these pictures, and I can't remember what order they come in. But who can tell me? That lady up there with the crown on, what shop does she represent? What shop? Anybody out there? Yeah, do you know? No, just stretching. Okay.

Go on then, Rachel. Starbucks. That's right. Starbucks coffee. Okay. So we'll take that one away. I'm not sure which the next one is, but let's just say it's that cheerful chat with a little beard. Who's that? Who's that? Can you tell me what his name is first? That's a good idea. Let me know what his name is. Are you stretching or answering? Okay. Go on then. KFC. What's that stand for? Kentucky Fried Chicken, Paul. Thank you, Paul. Kentucky Fried Chicken. There's not that one anyway. Okay, we'll go back there. That's McDonald's.

[2 : 0 6] Okay. McDonald's disappeared then. Oh no, not that way. That way. That way. Ah, great. Okay. Last one. It is something you eat, but it actually represents something else. No, you've answered question. No, you're not allowed again. No. Go on then, Anaya. Apple. What do they make? Iphones and computers, things like that, and you can order your food online, can't you as well? Okay. Banana. Banana. Thank you, Paul. Okay. Banana. Okay, so our memory verse. We're going to read through this together, and then we're going to think about it for a second, and then we're going to sing. Okay, so let's all of us read this out loud together.

Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. John chapter 6, verse 35. Okay. Who said that? Who said that? Who said that? Jesus did. That's right. So whoever comes to Jesus, that's what he says, comes to me will never go hungry, whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. Coming to Jesus here is the same as believing, isn't it? So when he says, whoever comes to me, whoever comes and believes in me, whoever comes and put their faith in me and trust in me will never go hungry and never be thirsty. But he's not talking about the food that we eat and the drink that we drink. He's talking about a greater need that we have.

Just like we need food and we need drink, we need something more than that, which only Jesus can provide, that which satisfies, that's what makes us complete, and that's a right relationship with God.

Whoever comes to Jesus finds in him what life is all about, finds out why God made us and why we are here in this world. It makes our lives make sense. Now we're going to sing a song together, and we haven't got the music for it because it's just going to be, it's a children's song. It's God is good to me.

Who knows this song? Don't they teach you songs anymore in camps that you go on? Steve, what's going on? Not a lot. Not a lot. Okay, good. Okay, this is an easy song. Hopefully most of you will know it. Okay? God is good to me.

[4 : 27] So it's got some, do you know it, Rachel? No? Okay, we sang it last year. It's very easy. It goes, God, and point up to heaven because God is our heavenly Father, is good. Be a thumbs up to me. Okay?

God is good to me. Okay? He made the world, okay, with just his word. Okay? God is good to me. Okay?

That's the first verse. We'll go all the way through with all the signs, and I hope for you'll remember them, and then we'll sing it together. The same one is, God is good to me. God is good to me. He sends the rain, okay, to swell the grain. So imagine that's like a wheat grain to make it swell.

God is good to me. God is good to me. He grows the wheat. So I want your fingers to be wheat growing up. Okay? Wheat growing up. For bread to eat, big thick sandwich, bread to eat. God is good to me.

And the last one, of course, reminds us of God's greatest gift. He gave his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is born for us, to save from sin. Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins. God is good to me. Okay? Think we can manage that? Good. Full of enthusiasm again. Okay. Well, let's all stand and sing this. If you want to sing with the actions, you can. If you don't want to sing with the actions, that's fine. Okay? So let's stand and sing. We haven't got any music, so we're going to sing it at the two, which is very, very easy. And those of you who know it, please sing along. Okay?

[5 : 57] God is good to me. God is good to me. God is good to me. He made the world a justice word. God is good to me. God is good to me. God is good to me. Amen.

I can't do it all the same time. He says for grain to swell the grain. God is good to me. God is good to me. God is good to me. He grows the wheat for bread to eat. God is good to me.

God is good to me. God is good to me. He made his son to save from sin. God is good to me.

Thank you. Okay. Very good. What have we got next? Okay. We're going to read from our Bibles, and we're also going to have the reading up on here, and also some pictures in a moment. And if you want to follow in your Bibles, it's from Luke and chapter 15. Luke and chapter 15. And there's three stories that Jesus tells in Luke 15 about things that are lost. But we're just going to read two of them. One of them we're just going to read, and the other one we're going to follow through the story with some pictures as well.

Okay? So it's Luke 15, beginning at verse 8. I'm going to read this one and the next lost story. Jesus just told a story about sheep, a sheep that got lost, and how the shepherd came and found it. And then he goes on and says this. Suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one.

[7 : 51] Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, Rejoice with me. I have found my lost coin. In the same way, I tell you, there's rejoicing in the presence of angels of God over one sinner who repents. Jesus continued. There once was a man.

This man seemed to be a wealthy man. He had servants and he had an estate. He had cattle and he had crops and so on. And this man had two sons, an older son and a younger son. The younger son said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate. You see, he knew that when his dad died, when his father died, all the money and all the property and all the farm and everything else would be shared, divided between him and his older brother. But he didn't want to wait until his dad had died. He wanted his share now.

So he's quite greedy and he was very impatient. So what did his dad do? So he divided his property between them. He did as his son said and gave him half the wealth that would come to him when he died.

What did the son do? Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had and set off for a distant country. He went far away to another place. What did he do with all that money he had?

Well, he partied. We're told when he had squandered his wealth on wild living, he took his money and he went to another place and he thought, this is it. I've got all this money. So he, we don't know what he did, but he did all sort of wrong things. He misspent his money, wasted his money on all sorts of parties and other things like that. But after he'd spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole land. He'd spent all his money, but then in the place he was, there was a failure. All the crops failed. There wasn't any food. And of course he had no money anyway to eat it. And he began to be in need. He began to be in need. He began to be hungry. What can I do? I've spent all my money.

[10:09] There's not much food about. I don't know what I can do. So he had an idea. He went and hired himself. I don't know if you can see those pigs very well. Went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him to his field to feed pigs. Now, feeding pigs isn't too, too bad for us.

They can be a bit smelly and they can be a bit muddy and that sort of thing. But for this young man, he would have come from a family where you didn't go anywhere near pigs. They were things that you considered to be unclean. You just didn't go and touch them. You wouldn't have anything to do with them. So it was really the worst job he could find for himself. But he longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating. He was so hungry, he wanted to eat the pig food, the pig swill.

That's not very nice because that's all the rubbish, all the cuttings, all the bits and pieces left over. It's not very nice at all. But he was so hungry, he wanted to eat that, that the pigs had. But no one gave him anything. No one gave him anything. Nobody gave him food. Nobody cared for him. Nobody loved him.

He was very, very, very hungry and sad. But something happened. When he came to his senses, he said, when he realised the problem he was in and realised what a fool he'd made of himself, he said to himself, how many of my father's hired men have food to spare? And here I am starving to death. I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men. He realised that his father had servants and people who worked for him on the farm and he thought, they've got food. I'll go back and get a job with my dad. I don't deserve to be his son because I've been so bad. I've taken the good things he's given me and wasted them and got myself in this own mess.

But perhaps he'll take me back and I can be a servant of his. So he got up and went to his father. He set off back to home. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. In other words, his father had been looking out for him each day, looking for the day when he would come back. And instead of being angry with him, he says he had compassion on him.

[12 : 31] He felt for him. He felt sorry for him. He felt love for him. So what did he do? He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. What a wonderful welcome. After all that he'd done in taking his money and wasting it, his father still welcomed him and embraced him. But the son said to him, Father, I've sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. So what did his dad do? Did he give him a job as a servant or as a hired man? No. But the father said to his servants, quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

He threw a great party, didn't he, for his son. He gave him all those clothes and he gave him sandals and he gave him a ring, which was a sign of being his favourite son. And he killed the fattened calf and they had a great big barbecue. Because he said this, for this son of mine was dead, but he is alive again. He was lost and is found. That's very important to remember what he said.

This son of mine was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. And Jesus told that story. We're going to think about why he told that story in a few minutes' time.

But we're going to sing another hymn together, another song together. It's quite, who knows this one, the earth is the Lord's and everything in it? A few folk, good. It's right.

All these people who come to this church have sung this song before, but it's a year ago and they forget. We don't sing it that often. It's very simple. It goes through the chorus. The men sing the first line, the earth is the Lord's and the ladies repeat, and everything in it. Okay, so it's very simple. It goes through like that. And the last line, and all things were made for his glory, we all sing together. Then there's the main verse, the mountains are as we all sing that together.

[14 : 37] And then we sing the chorus again together, but just at the end, notice it goes on a bit longer. So we all sing, and all things were made, yes, all things were made, all things were made for his glory.

Okay, we can manage that, can't we? Let's stand and sing together. We all sing together. We all sing together.

Well done. Well done. Please sit down.

So we've had this story that Jesus told about the son who was lost and found, the son who in his father's eyes had died, but was alive again. And the question is, what is that story all about? Why did Jesus tell that story?

[16 : 39] What does he want us to understand from that story? What do we need to know? Especially when we thought about our memory verse, that Jesus said, all who come to me will not go hungry.

Whoever believes in me will not be thirsty. What does he mean by all of that? So we're going to think about this story. Why did Jesus tell this story about the son who was lost? What does he want us to know?

Well, the first thing is that God is our maker. Like the father in the story, God is our heavenly father and he is the maker of every good thing that we have.

The world in which we live ourselves, our own lives. We come from him. He gives us life. He is the one who has provided everything. And he's given us all good things. And you can find them all on Google.

That's why I put Google there. Because I couldn't find a picture of everything in the whole world. But Google has everything in the whole world if you search for it. So he, but God has given us everything. It doesn't come from Google. But God provides everything for us. So God is our maker. He's given us everything.

[17 : 42] He's given us good things. Remember that father, he gave half of all of his wealth to his son. He gave good things to his son. And gave him good things to enjoy. And we've got good things to enjoy. If we've got friends, those are God's gift.

If you've got family, that's God's gift. If you've got a home and food and clothes, all these things ultimately come from God. But especially our lives. The fact that you and I are alive today is because God has given us life today.

And that's so precious and so important. And the question is, what do we do with the good gifts that God has given us? Okay, what do we do with the good gifts God has given us? Well, in the story, remember the son didn't take care of the things he was given.

And what have we done? Well, we've rejected God. Like that son, what did he do? Not long after he got all those good things, what did he do? He went away. He left his father. He rejected him, really. He said, Father, I don't want to live with you anymore.

I want to go and live for myself and please myself. And the truth is that every single person who lives is somebody who's ultimately said, God, I want to live for myself.

[18 : 50] I don't want to live in the way that you want me to live. I want to live to please myself and go my way. In fact, that means that we have misused God's gifts. The things that God's given us, our lives, were given to us as we sang in the song to please God, to serve God, to love God, to enjoy God.

But when we live for ourselves, we misuse the gifts that God has given us. We use them for ourselves. We use them to make ourselves rich. We use them to make ourselves happy. We use them to hurt other people. Or we use them to be selfish or greedy.

And the Bible calls that sin. Not just the things we do, but that attitude of heart that says, I want to please myself. I don't want to go God's way. I want to go my way. I wonder if we've ever thought about that for ourselves.

Have we ever realized that when we're selfish or proud, when we seek to please ourselves, we are doing the things that God does not want us to do. And we're rejecting God and we're sinning against God. That's what the Bible says.

But that may say, well, what does that matter? What does it matter if we just please ourselves? What does it matter if we hurt others? What does it matter if we reject God? Is it really important? Surely everybody just pleases themselves.

[20 : 14] Well, here's the thing. We are in trouble. Like that little picture shows, we are separated from God. Because of our sin, it creates this great chasm between us and God.

Instead of being right with God, friends with God, just as He created us to know Him and enjoy Him, because of our sin, we push God away from us. And because of our sin, God stands away from us.

We're separated from Him. We're separated from Him in life. That's why many people now don't believe in God. Many people live as if there is no God, because they have rejected Him and separated from Him.

And that's serious. You see, if we are separated from God now, the Bible says that we should be separated from God forever and ever and ever. If the problem isn't solved, if we aren't brought back to God, then we shall have everlasting separation from God.

Everlasting hell, the Bible says. Nothing nice. It's not that we just die and that's the end. The Bible makes it clear that when we die, we go on living either with God or without God.

[21 : 24] To be with God is heaven, is joy and bliss and delight and life. To be separated from God is to be everlastingly cut off from Him. And all that is good, to only know that which is sadness and grief and sorrow and pain.

So we're in big trouble and it's our fault. Like that young man who went away and he spent all that he had and wasted it. What happened? We're told he was in need. He had nothing left.

He was hungry and no one gave him anything to eat. He wanted to feed, even eat the food of the pigs. The sad thing is that a lot of people live their lives without God.

And when they live their lives without God, what happens is, instead of enjoying the good things that God their Heavenly Father gives, they end up eating pigs' food. Not literally, but they do those things which are horrible.

They enter into things which are dirty and filthy and unpleasant and grievous and sad. And they don't realize that the reason they're doing those things is because God is missing in their lives.

[22 : 26] So we've done that. All of us, every one of us, the Bible says, all of us have sinned. And we've fallen short of God's standard. We've become separated from God. Do we realize that we're in trouble?

So what must we do? Remember the story of the young man? He went away. He had all the good things his father gave him. He spent them all. He wasted them all.

He had nothing left. He became hungry and desperate in rags. Nobody gave him anything. He did something. The same thing that we must do. Wise up. Okay? We must wise up.

There's little Miss Wise. I don't know the story. We must use the selfish to make the crop on that. Right? Well, we need to wise up. In fact, Jesus said, when he came to his senses, that means wise up, when he realized what an idiot he'd been, when he realized how stupid he'd been, when he realized what wrong things he'd done, he wised up.

And unfortunately, many people never wise up. Many people live their lives thinking, I'm okay. I'll just live my life myself. When I die, that's the end. Or, hopefully I'll go to heaven because I've been genuinely quite a nice guy or a nice girl.

[23 : 36] The Bible makes it very clear that we need to realize that we are sinners. We need to recognize that our sinners separate us from God. We need to wise up to the fact that God is real and that he calls us to account for how we live.

Jesus loves that. He does. Which is what we're going to find out later, Lorraine. What we must do now, we need to wise up and we need to do something. Return to God. God. That's what he did, didn't he?

He didn't just say, oh, I've been such an idiot. I've such a fool. I've really got it wrong. I've made a mess. I'll stay where I am. I won't do anything about it. We're told that he got up and went back to his father.

And that's what the Bible says we've got to do. Remember, Jesus said, come to me. It's no good saying, I believe that there is Jesus. I believe there is a God. And I know that I've done wrong. We've got to act upon that.

The Bible calls it to repent. It means to turn around in the way we're going in our lives and to come to God. To turn away from our sin. Turn away from the things that are stupid and wrong.

[24 : 35] And turn back to God and to come to him. Return to God. But we might be afraid. What will God say? That's all right, Lorraine. Not just now, my love. What will God do, though, when we return to him?

What would the father do? That must have been what the son was thinking. He said, I've sinned against my father and I've sinned against heaven. What will he do? Hopefully he'll let me be just a servant.

What will God do if we come to him with our sin? When we come to him with the mess that we've made? When we come to him with realizing we've been stupid? What will God do? Will he turn us away? Will the father turn him away?

Well, we know what happened. What will God do? Welcome us. It's that lovely picture, isn't it? There's the father waiting and looking for the son to come back. And we're told when he saw him a long way off, he ran out to him and embraced him and kissed him.

He welcomed him back. When we turn to God, God will not reject us. Jesus said, whoever comes to me, I shall never turn away. So it doesn't matter how bad we've been.

[25 : 35] It doesn't matter how good we think we are. If we turn to God, he's promised that he will receive us and welcome us. He won't look down upon us and say, you're a terrible, awful person.

There's no way I can ever accept you. Every single one of us deserves him to reject us as we've rejected him. But he promises to welcome us, to receive us back to himself.

If we'll come. That's the problem, you see. We've got to wise up and we've got to come. If we don't do that, then we shall always be separated from him. What will he do next? He'll forgive us.

He'll put all our sins in the rubbish, if I can put it that way. All the things that we've done in the past that we're ashamed of. Those things that we said, which I wish I could take back those words.

The things that we did, I wish I could undo that action that I did, which was so hurtful. I wish I could reverse the thing that I did that makes me feel so bad about myself or guilty.

[26 : 33] God promises to forgive us. And forgiveness doesn't mean that the thing that's happened suddenly doesn't happen. It means that God says, I'm willing to wipe away.

I'm willing to take away that sin. I'm willing to treat you as if that sin never happened. To forgive you. Of course, to be forgiven, it means saying sorry.

It means recognizing we've done something wrong, doesn't it? So he'll welcome us and he'll forgive us. This one you can't see too well, unfortunately, because of the banister. It says, new life, chapter one.

The beginning of a new life. To be a Christian is starting a new life. That's why the Bible calls it being born again. Or being a new creation. It's a complete transformation.

All the past is forgiven and put behind. God says, in fact, your sins I'll remember no more. He doesn't forget them, because God can never forget like us. But he says, I choose not to remember them.

[27 : 32] And I choose to give you new life. Being a Christian is not just about knowing something. It's about experiencing God in our lives. It's about knowing him coming in and being part of us.

And making us alive. Remember what the Father said. This son of mine was dead. Now he's alive. Sin has cut us off from God and from the life of God.

When we put our faith in God, we put our faith in Jesus and come to him. He gives us new life to live. So, how can God do that? How can God do that?

How can God give us new life? How can God forgive us our sins? How can God welcome us back? Well, here's a very famous verse from the Bible that many of you will know. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son.

We'll stop there for a moment. Jesus Christ is God's gift to the world. The greatest gift. When he came from heaven to earth, God the son became a human being like us.

[28 : 34] He became one with us. Not only so he could experience life. But so that he could come to rescue us. And to make us right with God. Now, when you receive a gift or a present on your birthday or at Christmas, you've got to take it, haven't you?

And open it. And enjoy it. And Jesus Christ is God's gift to you and to me. To the world, in fact. He loved the world. So no matter who we are.

What we've done. There is a gift from God. The greatest gift. Even better than the gifts that we get in food and clothes and all those things. The gift that satisfies our hunger and our thirst.

Well, how did that happen? Well, because the cross of Jesus. Next part says, that whoever believes in him shall not perish.

That's a strange word, isn't it? Perish. Perish is really that word I was talking about before when we're separated from God. To perish is to lose everything. To lose our lives.

[29 : 37] To lose eternal life. To be in hell. To be far from God. Be cut off from God. But you see, the wonderful thing is, though our sins deserve us being cut off from God, Jesus Christ, God's son, went to the cross to be cut off from God in our place.

He died for you and for me. He died in our place. He took the punishment and the judgment that your sins and mine deserve. And he died so that we should not perish.

He paid the debt we owe. He took the blame. He took the guilt for us. Such was his amazing love. But, the last part says, but have eternal life.

So God so loved the world he gave. That's the gift of Jesus. His one and only son. That whoever believes in him shall not perish. That's because he died on the cross for us. But have eternal life. Why?

Because he rose again from the dead. Jesus Christ rose. This is like a picture of the empty tomb. On the day Jesus died, they buried him. But on the third day afterwards, he was alive.

[30 : 44] For 40 days, people saw him and spoke to him. 500 at one time. He is alive today. And in receiving Jesus, we receive not only the forgiveness that comes from the cross and his death for us.

But we receive the life, everlasting life. Because he lives forever, we too will live forever. That's how God has done it for us.

So the question is this. What will you do? Like that son, you've gone away from God. You've used the gifts God's given you for your own selfishness.

And you've rejected him. But God in his wonderful love is waiting and willing to receive you back. To forgive you and to give you eternal life.

And he's gone to all this for you. He sent his son to live and to die and to rise again for you and for me. So what are we going to do? Ignore the gifts? Carry on living our own life away from God?

[31 : 49] Or are we going to be like that son in the story? Yeah, we've made a mess of things. But come back to God, our heavenly father. Remember what the father did. Not only did he embrace him, not only did he welcome him and kiss him.

But he put a new robe on him. Put a ring on his finger. Sandals on his feet. And he had a great party and a barbecue. When we come back to God, he gives us much more than we ever had before.

He replaces the things that we've lost with better things in the Lord Jesus Christ. Newness of life. Wonderful joy. Wonderful joy. He brings us into that place where one day we know that we shall not only be with him now, but be with him in heaven as well.

I ask you again, what will you do? Have you come to your senses? Have you wised up? Whether you're young or old, have you seen that your life is not as it should be?

If that's the case, then speak to somebody. Speak to maybe somebody from the weekend if you're with the church group here. Speak to somebody, maybe your mum or dad. Or speak to one of the people here at church.

[32 : 58] That they can help you to come back to God and to know his wonderful forgiveness and life. You've sat really, really well. All you boys and girls, fantastic. We've just got one more hymn we're going to sing together now.

And then that will be the end of our service this morning. Please do stay for a cup of tea or coffee, refreshments. And all of you who are heading back off to Sheffield, have a safe journey this afternoon.

We'll sing the hymn and then we'll close in prayer together. Our final harvest hymn, Come you thankful, people come. Come you thankful, people come.

Come you thankful, people come.

Come you thankful, people come.

[34 : 58] John, man. You're welcome. Absolutely. You're welcome.

It's long and right there.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Praise the glorious harvest all. Please do be seated.

[36 : 36] Thank you. Thank you. Let's pray together as we close. O Lord, our God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you again for all that you have given, especially on this harvest, the food and clothes and the material needs for our bodies.

But Lord, we're more than just bodies. We are spirits as well. There's more to us than just what can be seen. And we thank you that you've provided for us the greatest gift of all, that we might have life everlasting through Jesus Christ, your Son.

O Lord, we do acknowledge that we have left you and rejected you and gone our own way. We thank you that you willingly receive us and welcome us back when we come trusting and believing in Jesus.

Thank you that he is the one who satisfies our hunger, who quenches our thirst. He's the one that makes life full. And he's the one that makes sense of life.

Help us. As we pray, each one of us this morning, whether we've come back to Jesus already or not, help us to come to you day by day to give you our thanks and praise.

[37 : 44] Help us to continue to trust you and put our faith in you. And O Lord, we ask that you would make us again, those who are mindful and thoughtful of others who have so little, that we might be generous with the gifts you give us, just as you've been so generous in giving to us.

We ask these things now as we ask your blessing and your help through the remainder of today. In Jesus' name, Amen.