

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 15: 11-19

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week, we are going to read Luke Chapter 15 and today we will read verses 11 to 19.

Let us not forget that at the beginning, Jesus was speaking to two groups of people. The first group was the tax collectors and sinners. After hearing Jesus spoke about the cost of being a disciple, they did not shrink back; instead, they desired to know more and wanted to listen further to His teaching. The other group was the scribes and Pharisees. They came with a critical spirit, complaining that Jesus was eating with sinners. In response to these two different audiences, Jesus spoke three parables.

The first parable reveals that He is the Good Shepherd. If one sheep is lost out of a hundred, He would leave the ninety-nine to go after the one that is lost. He is willing to pay the price and to suffer, showing that His salvation is for all humanity—for every sheep. When Jesus, the Son of God, completed His work and ministry on earth, salvation was accomplished.

Then He spoke the second parable, about a woman—symbolizing the Holy Spirit—who diligently searches within the heart of each sinner. She brings light and sweeps carefully until she finds the lost coin. If one coin is missing out of ten, it is incomplete. This shows that the Holy Spirit's work of searching, enlightening, and cleansing is also for every individual. After speaking these two parables, Jesus went on to tell the third parable.

Verse 11: "Then He said: "A certain man had two sons."

Let us return again to the beginning—the two groups of people Jesus was addressing. One group corresponds to the elder son in the parable; the other group corresponds to the younger son.

Verse 12: “And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood.”

At that time, Jewish customs were similar to Chinese customs—inheritance was usually divided only after the father had passed away. However, this younger son, while his father was still alive, said to him, “Give me the portion of goods that falls to me.” This “portion” refers to property and material possessions. While his father was still living, he demanded that his share of the inheritance be given to him in advance. I believe that for any father, such a request would be deeply painful.

Nevertheless, the father divided his possessions among them. Earlier, the younger son asked for the “portion of goods that falls to me,” which refers merely to material wealth. But when the father divided the inheritance, the English translation uses the word “livelihood,” meaning that he divided what sustained his very life and living.

If we look carefully at the original Greek, it is very meaningful. The word used there is *bios*. In Greek, there are three different words for “life”: one is *zoe*, which generally refers to spiritual life; another is *psuche*, related to psychology, referring to the soul life; and the third is *bios*, related to biology, referring to physical life.

Here, it indirectly points out that our physical life originally belongs to the Father who created us. When the younger son asked for his share of the inheritance, the father gave him this *bios*—his physical means of life. Originally, we were created by God and should dwell in His house; even our physical life belongs to Him. Yet because of the younger son’s request, God allowed it, and the father divided the inheritance to them.

Verse 13: “And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.”

We commonly refer to this younger son as the “prodigal son.” While his father was still alive, he demanded his share of the inheritance. Once the father divided it, he took his *bios*—his physical life—into his own hands. The first decision he made was to go to a far country.

The “far country” represents a place where the father could not see him and could not exercise authority over him. Before anyone falls, the first step is to leave the Father’s house—to go far away, beyond His rule. Once he arrived there, he lived recklessly and wasted his possessions. Everything we have was originally created by the Father and should belong to Him. But when we demand independence and choose to leave, God allows it. And once a person leaves the Father’s house—leaves God—the only thing he can do is live recklessly and waste what he has.

God has allotted each of us a fixed amount of time in this life. The most precious resource a person has in this world is actually time. In principle, everything you desire is obtained by exchanging your time for it. When you spend your time on things that have no value, no meaning, and no connection to eternity, it is essentially living recklessly and wasting your possessions. You may work hard and accumulate large numbers in your bank account, but when your time is up and you depart, you cannot take any of it with you—it has no value for you in eternity. Or you may spend your whole life striving, gaining power and high position, but when your time comes to an end, none of it will belong to you anymore.

Like Alexander the Great, who built an empire spanning Europe, Asia, and Africa—yet when he died in his thirties, it is said he asked for his coffin to have openings on both sides so that his hands could be shown empty. Though he possessed great power on earth, he left with nothing.

The younger son took his inheritance to a far country, where he lived recklessly and wasted his possessions.

Verse 14: “But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.”

Our life is limited, our strength is limited, and our time is also limited. When we turn away from the Father and live recklessly in the world, wasting what we have, we will soon exhaust everything. And at that very moment, a severe famine arises in that land, and he begins to be in want—like a leaking roof encountering a night of heavy rain.

Verse 15: “Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.”

When we leave the Father’s house and wander in the world, eventually exhausting all that sustains our living, and then encounter a famine, we fall into complete poverty and are forced to depend on someone in that land.

Our true help comes from God. What people in the world can offer you is merely to send you to feed pigs. For the Jews, they did not eat pork, and pigs could not be used for sacrifice; raising pigs was considered an unclean occupation. When we rely on people in the world, the help we receive is often no more than this—leading us into things that are unclean.

Verse 16: “And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.”

This world is not as generous as our heavenly Father. When we ask for the inheritance that we think we deserve, the Father gives it generously; but once you fall into the world and take up the “occupation of feeding pigs,” the world is extremely harsh. What it provides is far from enough to sustain your living. Eventually, the condition becomes such that you long to fill your stomach with the pods that the pigs eat, yet no one gives you anything.

Think about it—hasn't your experience often been like this? No matter what we strive and struggle for in the world, even if we eventually make this "pig-feeding business" grow large and successful—yes, the business prospers, and the pigs are well-fed and fat—but inwardly we remain deeply empty. The pigs can be satisfied with the pods, but we who feed them cannot even partake of them. What satisfies the pigs does not satisfy us; instead, we remain unfulfilled, with a sense of emptiness within.

Verse 17: "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! "

This was a very important turning point in his life—he came to himself. How did he awaken? He remembered that in his father's house there were many hired servants who had bread enough and to spare, while he himself was perishing with hunger. He was so hungry that he could not even eat the pods that the pigs were eating. Then he thought of his father's house—where even the hired servants had more than enough to eat. Rather than laboring here, it would be better to return home and be a hired servant.

We should not underestimate this awakening. It marked the beginning of his repentance. This awakening was also the result of the earlier work described in the parable of the woman searching for the lost coin—the deep inner working, enlightening, searching, and cleansing within his heart—until finally he came to his senses.

We should treasure every moment of awakening in our lives. Many times, we go our own way and do things that do not please God, and as a result, we encounter difficulties in our circumstances. At such times, the Holy Spirit begins to work within us—bringing light, cleansing, and searching—until one day, we awaken: in the Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; shall I remain here and perish with hunger?

Verse 18-19: “ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’”

For such an awakening, we offer our thanksgiving and worship. In our lives, there have also been many times when God has granted us such moments of awakening. When we truly realize that what we are doing has deviated from God’s will, that awakening becomes the beginning of repentance. May God help us to have many such awakenings in our daily lives.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Just like the younger son, when he went his own way and reached the end of himself, he came to an awakening. Lord, help me—through what we have read today—shine Your light again on my daily life, on my thoughts and my actions. If there is anything not according to Your will, remind me now, so that I may have a new beginning, so that I may awaken. We truly do not want to be busy in this world all our lives, only to end up with nothing. How we long that what we think and do each day may one day count for something in Your kingdom. Help us to examine our daily lives, and let the Holy Spirit continually do the work of searching and shining within our hearts, often granting us such realizations. Whenever we drift off course, give us a fresh start—just like the younger son who came to himself. Help me and bless my life today. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen!