

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

Luke 15: 25-32

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Luke chapter 15, verses 25 to 32.

We must not forget that at the beginning of this chapter, Jesus was speaking to two groups of people: one group was the tax collectors and sinners, that is, the younger son in the parable of the prodigal son. They had once gone far away from the father and had recklessly squandered their wealth outside. However, one day they came to their senses, returned to the father's house, and received the father's complete acceptance and complete love. The father put the best robe on them, put a ring on their finger, put sandals on their feet, and killed the fattened calf to celebrate and rejoice together with everyone.

There was another group, the scribes and Pharisees, represented by the older son. Starting from verse 25, the entire focus turned to the older son. We can imagine that while Jesus was speaking to these two groups, He turned His eyes and addressed the scribes and Pharisees present—those who considered themselves righteous—and spoke about the older son.

Verse 25: “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.”

The older son was indeed law-abiding and dutiful. When it was time to work, he went to work. He did not even know that his younger brother had returned home, because he had been busy working in the field. It was not until he came back and was still a distance from the house that he heard the sound of music and dancing, which was very unusual to him.

Verses 26-27: “So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fattened calf.’”

His reaction was completely different from that of the father. The father was extremely joyful because his younger son had returned safe and sound, for he had been longing for this son every day. As soon as the son returned, he killed the fattened calf to celebrate together. But when the older son heard what his father had done.

Verse 28: “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.”

His mindset was completely different from the father’s. Because of love, the father had accepted this younger son with full inclusion. But the older son, because of self-righteousness, felt that he himself had done very well. Toward the younger son, he was full of judgment; he felt that his brother was unworthy. He had already taken the inheritance that belonged to him, he had left the father, and he should no longer belong to this family.

A self-righteous person, on one hand, demands that he himself strictly observe all kinds of laws and regulations outside. Once he has kept them, he has no tolerance for those who cannot keep them or for those who have made mistakes; he looks down on them from the bottom of his heart. Unexpectedly, after such a son returned, the father instead rejoiced and was glad over him. Therefore he became very angry and refused to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him.

Verses 29-30: “So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as

soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.”

In this passage, when he spoke to his father, he directly addressed his father as “you.” There are a total of six “you”s, and he never once called him “Father.” In other words, he had completely the mindset of a hired servant. He was working in his father’s house, and to him the father was simply a “you.” “I have been serving you these many years; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.” It seemed that his joy was not to be found together with the father. The father was his boss; he worked for the boss, listened to the boss’s words, and did not disobey the boss’s commands. In his feeling, he had worked for so long and had never experienced joy. Even so, he gritted his teeth and endured, continuing to work every day as usual. But the moment he saw his younger brother return from outside and receive the father’s complete acceptance and complete love, his heart was filled with jealousy.

He said “this son of yours.” He did not call his father “Father,” but “you”; nor did he call his brother “brother,” but “this son of yours.” “Who has devoured your livelihood with harlots; as soon as he came, you killed the fatted calf for him.” He not only condemned his younger brother—although his brother did indeed have faults—he even condemned his father, as if saying, “You are truly unfair. I have done so much, yet you never gave me a young goat; but this person—he is a prodigal son—yet you killed the fatted calf for him. How unfair this is!”

I believe that as Jesus looked at these scribes and Pharisees, His eyes were deep and penetrating; His gaze was sharp. These words struck right into the depths of their hearts. They indeed thought this way. They had worked hard and disciplined themselves, carefully keeping every command and regulation God had given them, yet they had completely forgotten that their relationship with the Father is a relationship of life, not the relationship of a hired servant.

Verse 31: “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.’”

We can imagine that at this moment Jesus’ eyes were filled with gentle kindness and compassion as He said to these scribes and Pharisees: Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

Verse 32: “It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.”

Here Jesus seemed to be saying to these scribes and Pharisees, “You have all misunderstood. Your relationship with God is a father-son relationship. You have been with the Father for many years, and all that the Father has is yours. Why have you given up the identity of a son and adopted the mindset of a hired servant? Why are you living as a poor child in a rich family?

You are always with Me, and all that I have is yours. Our household is so rich—you can come and enjoy it together at any time. Why do you tightly cling to those things you consider right in your own eyes? In your self-righteousness, you cannot understand My heart. Don’t you know that ever since your brother left, I have been longing for his return for many years? Today he has come back—shouldn’t we be glad? Why are you so bitterly keeping the law over there? Don’t you know that everything in the house is for you to enjoy? Why do you not experience in life all that I have prepared for you, but instead miserably try to use your own works to satisfy all the requirements of the law? Once you have done so, you become full of demands on others as well.

The true condition in life is this: You are with Me, and all that I have is yours—everything you can experience and enjoy. And your brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found. Every time someone in the church receives grace and is saved, or a prodigal returns home, we ought to rejoice and be glad.

Of course, at that time Jesus was describing to the scribes and Pharisees what they were thinking in their hearts; it was exactly this older son's mindset. Today we are not scribes or Pharisees. After we have received grace and been saved, in God's household we learn together with God's many children how to serve and how to worship. How many times have we also fallen into this older son's mindset?

What is the older son's mindset? It is being unable to stand seeing others do better than us in the church. The church is a place where sinners receive grace and are saved; it is also a place where, after receiving grace and being saved, every Christian grows in life. Inevitably, we are always especially tolerant toward those who have just been saved and have just received grace, and everyone gives them even more care and love. When you see such a situation, do you sometimes feel a sour feeling in your heart? Or when you and others are engaged together in a ministry work, and other saints always do better and faster than you, does a feeling of jealousy arise in your heart?

We must learn to look at things from Father God's perspective. When someone is willing to repent, believe, and receive grace and be saved, to the Father this is someone who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found. Therefore the whole family ought to rejoice and be glad. When we serve in God's household, it is not for our own status, not for our own benefit, and not for our own display, but so that every child belonging to God may receive appropriate care, an appropriate environment, and appropriate growth in God's household.

Every time those self-righteous and proud attitudes rise up in our hearts, we must ask the Holy Spirit to shine His light and help us, so that we do not fall into this older son's mindset. In God's household, we have not come to work for God, but to grow together with all brothers and sisters in life and to be filled with enjoyment from heaven in our daily living. Among brothers and sisters there is full help and support, with no criticism and no judgment, so that every child of God may settle down and find their place securely in God's household.

Let us pray together: Lord, forgive us. How many times have we unknowingly fallen into this older son's mindset? We often think we are right and often consider ourselves righteous, and we are unable to have the Father's heart to treat the saints around us. Help us; shine Your light on us. Let us see that all that You have is ours, that we can enjoy it all, and that from it we can learn and let our lives grow. Bless my life and bless my service so that they may all be according to Your will. Thank You. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ.