

UNDESERVED: GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Luke 15:11-32

INTRODUCTION:

How many of you have ever played golf before? Golf is one of those sports that a person either loves or loathes. I for one, enjoy playing golf for various reasons. Some of those reasons include: the concentration and precision it requires, the comradery that is enjoyed, and the ability to enjoy the beauty of God's wonderful creation as you play. Golf can be rather enjoyable so long as you don't get too caught up in your score. These are all great reasons to enjoy golf. However, there is another reason to enjoy golf that many people fail to give much thought too. Of all the sports a person could participate in, golf is the only sport I have ever played where I have been able to take a mulligan.

Now, if you don't play golf you may be wondering what a mulligan is. A mulligan is a term widely used to describe a "do over" or a second chance. Although it is not allowed in professional golf tournaments, many of us armatures who play allow the use of one mulligan, typically on the first tee shot. If you hit your ball off the first tee but don't like that shot, you take a mulligan (do-over).

Here's the truth this morning, though. You don't have to play golf to enjoy the benefits of a mulligan. We all have had those moments in our lives where we were ashamed or perhaps embarrassed by something that has happened or something we did and we later came to regret it. It is during these moments we wish we could change that we desire a mulligan (do-over).

Perhaps there are some of you here this morning, and you've messed up. You have fallen short in your walk with God. Maybe you have said or done things publicly that a child of God should never say or do. If we are totally honest, some of us may have flat out failed God by not living up to His standard. Some of us sit here this morning and we know what we need, we need a mulligan. We need the opportunity to start over.

If that feeling describes any of you this morning, then I have great news for you. You can have a mulligan. You can start over and you don't have to feel guilty about it. Our heavenly Father loves when we realize our need for a mulligan and come back home to Him. What I want you to remember this morning is this: No one has gone so far away from God that they can't find their way back. To help us understand how much God desires for us to come back, let's look at a time when someone messed up and needed to come back home and start over.

THE YOUNG MAN WHO NEEDED A SECOND CHANCE (LK. 15:11-16)

A father has two sons, and right off we are introduced to the younger of them and learn three very interesting things about him. **This young man goes to his father and makes a selfish request for his inheritance (v. 12).** There are two problems with the request of this younger son. First, typically, an inheritance came after the death of the father, but by law, the father could divide his estate and give it out while he was still living. Under Jewish law, the older son received two-thirds of the estate (**Deut. 21:17**). Secondly, by asking his father for an early inheritance, he was in essence saying, "I wish you were dead." Can you imagine saying such a thing to your father? Certainly, some of those

who have lost their earthly fathers would do almost anything to bring them back so they could see them again. This young man's father was still living but he basically is wishing his father was dead.

Notice, we don't read of the father arguing with his son over his request or even him trying to talk him out of it. Instead, we read, "And he divided his property between them" (v. 12). Not many days later, the younger son packs up all he had and leaves his father's house to go into a far country (v. 13).

We don't know how far the word far means in this passage. But, I think the point is that **the younger son left his father house and went into a far country and lived a life of rebellion**. This young man wanted to distance himself from his father and his upbringing so much so that he wasted (squandered) his wealth in "reckless" living. The older brother even mentions that he devoured his inheritance with prostitutes (**v. 30**). Whether that is literal or figurative doesn't really matter. The point is he wasted what his father had worked so hard to give him.

The third thing we learn about this younger son is that he experienced the difficulties of hitting rock bottom (vs.15-16). He left home looking for a party. But he learned something that many prodigals learn along the way. The fun was only temporary. The pleasures of sin don't last forever (**Heb. 11:25**). Eventually, his money ran out and he was alone (V. 16). Things were so bad he hired himself out to the job of feeding pigs, one of the most degrading and humiliating task he could have done, especially as a Jewish man because pigs were considered unclean (**Lev. 11:7**). He was lonely and hungry. His life was so bad he would have gladly eaten what the pigs were eating.

Some of you find yourselves here this morning. You have wandered away from what you were taught and what you know is right. Sure, you are here this morning physically, but spiritually you find yourself living in a far country away from the truth of God's Word. No matter where you are today, I want you to understand something. As long as there is air to breathe, there is hope. No one is so far away from God that they can't find their way back to God.

THE ONE QUESTION HE HAD TO ANSWER (VS. 17-20a) – "What Am I Going To Do?"

For this young son who had hit rock bottom, there was only one question left to answer. The question he had to answer was, "What am I going to do?" His life was a mess. He was away from home, away from his father and virtually alone taking care of pigs and longing to eat what they ate. Something had to give and for those of us in this same boat, something has to give in our lives as well.

He thought about his life – “When he came to his senses...” This young finally stopped and considered his life for a moment. How had he gotten himself into this pigpen he was in? He had gotten there by rebelling against the teaching of his father and living a life of sin and pleasure. But finally, after stopping to consider his life, he finally came to his senses. He realized there was something better and that something better started back home with his father. His father’s hired servants, day laborers, had it better than he did. They may not have had the same advantages he had in life, but they took advantage to make the most of their opportunity. He needed to take advantage of the opportunity he had to return home.

However, in order to do this, **he had to put away his pride.** He said, **“I will arise and go to my father and say, I have sinned...”** (vs. 18-19). It’s not easy to admit you were wrong. But in order to return home to the Father, we have to put away our pride and say, “Father I have sinned.”

Note, it wasn’t enough to just think this though. He had to swallow his pride, get up and head back home. And that’s exactly what the young man did. **He headed back home not knowing how he would be received by his father.** Can you imagine the anxiety and fear this young man must have felt? What would his father say? What would his father do? Would he be accepted back after everything he had done and put his father through?

Maybe some of you have this same feeling this morning. You know your life needs to change. For the sake of your family and your eternity, you need get out of the spiritual pigpen you are in and return home to the father. Maybe you really want to put away your pride and repent of your sins and return home, but you are afraid. You are afraid of how you will be accepted. If this describes you this morning, then I want to offer you a big dose of hope. Notice the reaction of the father when his lost son finally made his way back home.

THE HEART OF A LOVING FATHER (vs. 20-32)

The father will never stop loving you no matter what you do. This young man did everything wrong. He had embarrassed his father and entire family and community. He had acted in a selfish way that others would have seen and been shocked by. And yet, even through all this, the father never stopped loving him. As soon as he saw him, he felt compassion for him (v. 20).

We must be reminded that God loves us even when we chose to rebel against Him and live our own way. There is nothing you can do that will cause God to stop loving you (**Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8**). And God doesn’t love us because we are so lovable, he loves us because He is a Father. Parents will understand this. They don’t stop loving their children because of something they’ve done. They may not be happy about what they are doing or how they are choosing to live, but they never stop loving them. I want to remind you today, that God will never stop loving you no matter what your life is like. And if your life is not right, God, the father, desires that you put away your pride and return home this very moment.

The father anxiously awaits your return (v. 20). It's interesting to note that we are never told how long the young man was gone. And an even bigger note to point out is that the father didn't care. Whether it was a week, a month or year, all that mattered was that the son had finally found his way back home. The father was so anxious for his son's return home, he ran out to meet him as he was approaching. It would have been humiliating for a nobleman to run in this day and time, but again, the father didn't care. His son who was lost had now been found. He had been waiting for this day ever since the son first took off and left. For those of you who are away from your heavenly father today, I want you to know that he is awaiting your return. In fact, God waits on the Second Coming because He is not willing that "Any should perish..." (**2 Pet. 3:9**). He wants his lost children to return home so He gives your ample opportunity.

The father doesn't give you what you deserve (vs. 21-22). Immediately, the father embraces the son and begins to kiss him repeatedly. Instead of putting his son in his place and telling him how wrong he was for leaving, he repeatedly hugs and kisses him. The father didn't have to show the young son how wrong he was to wander away; his son already knew it. The father was so overwhelmed by his son's return, that the son couldn't even finish his planned speech because it seems his father cut him off. In the son's eyes, he wasn't worthy to be called a son, but he was going to be treated like one. Because the father doesn't give us what we deserve. For the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation for all people... (**Tit. 2:11**). The apostle Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (**1 Cor. 15:10**). Thanks be to God for His amazing and undeserved grace.

God celebrates when you return home (vs. 23-24; 25-26). Upon his son's return, the father threw a magnificent party and wanted to celebrate. It's not uncommon for us to celebrate joyous occasions. In the eyes of the father, this was as joyous an occasion as there would ever be. His son who was lost had been found; his son who had been dead was now alive. Whenever someone returns home to the father, there is always a celebration. Notice what Jesus said earlier in this same chapter when He said, "There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (**Lk. 15:10**). The older son approached the house, heard music and dancing, and wonder what was going on. When he learned his brother had returned, he became angry and refused to go on. The father comes out to his older son and pleads with him to come in and celebrate with his brother. It's important to note, the father expected his oldest son to come in and celebrate the return of the lost son too. When someone returns who was lost, God expects all of His children to celebrate.

CONCLUSION:

Some of you may find yourself away from your heavenly Father and in need of a return trip home. If that's you please remember this, no one this morning has gone so far away from God that they can't find their way back to God. This morning you have an opportunity to take a mulligan and start over in your walk with God. God is calling the prodigal to come without delay so don't wait, but respond today by coming back home to the father.