

Luke

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Preacher: Oakley, Raymond (1927-2011)

[0 : 00] Thank you.

He also Christ is great. If Lord is pleased to help, I wish to direct you to the chapter we read.

The well-known words found in verses 22, 23, and 24. Where we read, But the Father said to his servant, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.

For this, my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

No, we don't know all about this text, do we? Although we've heard it preached from, probably, time and time again.

[1 : 49] Can we, beloved friends, who are finite, ever really comprehend the infinite?

And the Word of God is like its author, absolutely infinite. I find, when I come to the scriptures, that I see in this chapter, oftentimes a little more that I saw before, or something else that I've never seen before.

And this is the way that God the Holy Spirit, who is a living entity, discovers the sacred truth of God to us.

Some may say, well, the whole chapter, more or less, is a parable, which means a story. But in reply, I say, this story fell from those sacred and holy lips of Christ.

It can be relied on. It can be depended on. In time and in eternity. And every word in this blessed story is the truth.

[3 : 22] And will be our eternal favor, if we are found, mirrored in this account of the prodigal, because we're all prodigals.

The whole of the chapter has to deal with the prodigal, the one who went away from the father, and you and I did just that. We did it in Adam.

All of sin. All of us went away from God. We were deceived in thinking by the serpent, as the poor prodigal was, that the lust of the eye and the pride of life and the things of the world.

Oh, Eve saw that fruit and it was good. And she desired it. And in consequence, she fell.

And the seeds of that fall are in all of us. How many are there here who fought hard to get away from religion, real religion, to get away from good preaching?

[4 : 43] I heard of people years ago, they went as far to Australia. They were determined to get away naturally from a good home, from a good cause of truth.

They went as far to Australia. They had to come back. Had to come back. And perhaps there are some here tonight who have had to come back.

I think it's wonderful this account of the joy of God. The joy of God. And when I come to speak of the divinity, of the divine essence, and that supreme being, the one in three and three in one, how difficult it is to speak of his joy.

Because God is in and of himself eternally happy. Without variation. saying to my beloved flock last night, God is perfect.

And that which is perfect can never change. There can never be any variation. So God is eternally happy in and of himself.

[6 : 11] All through the fall, all in the way of redemption, he never changes. His body is vibrant. We have to take into account the incarnate Son.

And I was thinking of that wonderful demonstration. And the poet phrases it like this. He feels, that is Christ, He feels each tempted member's aims.

and their afflictions is when Christ stood at the grave of Lazarus and he wept. There, as the God-man, he showed that divine compassion.

And you know the meaning of the word compassion? Everybody told you? compassion means fellow suffering.

And God's compassion is he suffers with the person, his joy, who is suffering.

[7 : 31] God. Don't forget hearing our dear friend Mr. Faulkner many, many years ago from a text in the Psalms and oh, it was that text.

God is a very present help in trouble. And he dropped this phrase. He said, God to his own child will be nearer than the trouble.

God makes himself nearer than the trouble. You know that one phrase has helped me over many a style. not. It's helped me along through the years when troubles have come thick and fast.

God nearer. This poor prodigal. He had gone out from the father and he had lost all.

I don't think he intended to do it. Don't think he intended to be a dissolute wretch. But you see sin is always deceitful.

[8 : 53] I've ever been in trouble I know where to put the blame. If you're like me you have to put the blame at the law of sin. The devil said to Eve our first mother now thou should know good and evil if you take of the fruit of this tree ye shall be as gods.

But you see he's always been a cheat and a liar. He never did tell her that Adam and Eve after the fall would know good but not have the power to do it.

And they would know evil and never have the power to cease from it. The prodigal went out with that portion of goods and it wasn't long before he had spent everything.

It shows that he was devoid entirely of wisdom and devoid of everything. He never kept a little bit back for a rainy day. It all had to go. and what happened he began to be in want and when he began to be in want he joined himself we read to that citizen of the country who sent him to work feeding the swine.

you know I think that this citizen was a person who believed in free will.

[10 : 30] I believe he was a free will parcel or like one because if such come into contact with poor prodigals they know only one remedy put them to work put them to work give them something to do that God certainly will resolve all your troubles if you have something to do.

He put into this menial task of feeding the swine I could enlarge on it but I won't because time won't allow. And so we see the state of this sinner growing worse and worse in as much that he fain would have filled his belly with the husk that the swine did eat.

But he couldn't. And he came to himself. Oh I remember as a young chap at Rowley I was more contentious than I am now.

And we all have to learn that in contention there lack not pride but all the fierce arguments and debates I've had with folk on that particular verse he came to himself.

They say ah there it is. There it is. It shows you that a sinner can come to himself. It shows you that he himself can do it. Now I hope in fact I'm persuading that you have been taught.

[12 : 10] The only way to understand the word of God is to compare scripture with scripture. When you consider the apostle Paul when he speaks in his letter to the Ephesians he tells us exactly what this means about coming to ourselves.

And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air that's the devil the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind and whereby nature the children of wrath even as others as but God who is rich in mercy for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins this is it hath quickened us together with

Christ by graciously and hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Let me just say, oh, what a wonder it will be in those ages to come. I once read a discourse of a dear man who is dead now and he said, in the ages to come these prodigals will be quickened and raised up with Christ to sit in heavenly places in Christ.

It will be just like a curtain being drawn back in heaven. And there they are. The question is, who are these?

[14 : 32] They're not angels. Who are these? These are they. Who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

Who have entered into the glorious inheritance of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are they who came to themselves because they were quickened.

Now, you will know when you come here what this means. You will know by vital spiritual experience what it means to come to yourself.

And you can look this way, you can look that way, you can look every way, and you will say, and you will say, and you will say, as the poet says, no help in self, I find, and yet a solid work.

The native treasure of my mind is sin and death and hell. And there are some people who commit suicide when they come there. I've read of philosophers.

[15 : 39] Voltaire, a philosopher during the time of the French Revolution in France. Oh, how applauded he was for his philosophies. When he came to die, he pointed to the flames and the fire grate, and he said, that's where I'm going.

All his life, misguided by philosophy, applauded by men, and yet, on his deathbed, he came, he came to himself.

The call of his heart rent. The scales taken from his eyes. I say, what a mess. When we're brought there, and yet we're taken further.

Because, friend, if you know that sin is a disease, and you know that you're a sinner, that's only one part of the matter. I know that I am a sick man, but that doesn't heal me.

That doesn't bring health to me. I need the touch of the physician. I need the healing man. And so do you.

[16 : 51] He came to himself. And when he came to himself, memory was stirred. I tell you this, on the basis of the word of God, and my own experience, there's only one thing that can arouse us in this dull, sinful world, and that is the grace of God.

You have to be quickened. Grace always arouses a person. It causes him to stand up.

It lifts him up. It helps him up. It keeps him up. And when this chap, this poor lad, was raised up, he said, well, in my father's house, there's bread enough and to spare.

he was brought to the reality of the knowledge of the bounty of the father. Now, oh, Satan wants to keep us from this.

Satan would. Well, let me tell you what our dear friend, Mr. Kenneth Caudill, you know who Kenneth Caudill is, used to say, he said, I heard him preach once and he's got that quaint way with him, but very telling way.

[18 : 15] He said, it's like having a telescope. Now, when Satan puts a telescope into the hand of a child of God, he wants him to turn the large end to his eye so that whenever he looks at the things of God, they're always tiny, always small.

But when grace is effectively working in a dear man or woman's heart, that telescope is turned round.

And though we may look through that small end at how everything is magnified, how everything is seen in its true perspective, now this poor man has got nothing.

He's stunk in his wagons. And yet he said, in my father's house there's bread and up and despair and friend.

As it was then, I tell you the same tonight. Oh, we can never exaggerate when we come to speak of the God of all grace. Never exaggerate when we come to speak of the bounty, the mercy of God.

[19 : 31] There is bread enough and to spare. Hearken. the disciples said to Christ, now he's getting late and there's a great multitude here.

Send them away. Let them go into the village to buy vittles. And ultimately, they had to say, there's a lad here with, what was it, five loaves and two small fishes.

And they must have been amazed when Christ sat down, tell the people to sit down. What was it, seven thousand, twelve thousand? Terrific number! Five thousand?

Tell the people to sit down and they all sat down and eat. He blessed that all. And it says, they all did eat and were satisfied and they took up twelve baskets full that were left home.

In my father's house there's bread enough and to spare. Friend, the minister is unworthy and knows it.

[20 : 51] But I feel I can creep in with that little that's to spare. Little that's to spare. You can look at others and you can say, ah, the Lord bless you.

But when you come to speak of yourself, it's a different matter and I hope to be one of those receiving a little of that that is to spare.

For yet, there is room. And we read that he came to the Father. I love what dear John Bunyan says.

John Bunyan says that he came to a time in his experience when he just had to arise and go to the Father. When it was a question of action, and he said if the Father's hand had held swords and spears, he would have had to have thrown himself on them because, he said, he was such a sinner, nevertheless, he was persuaded that only God could do him good.

And when he ran to the Father, there were no swords and spears but just as this dear lad, there was a Father's love. For the Father saw him a great way off.

[22 : 16] I believe the Father had seen him all the way through. God does. I believe the Father knew the state in which his son was in.

Harkin, how did the elder brother know that he devoured his living with harlots, this dreadful elder brother? I don't want to get involved with him tonight, but I always know I'm out of spiritual sorts when I begin to feel sorry for the elder brother.

Dreadful contests have rent the church through the years about this elder brother, but I base my opinion on this. He turned to the Father and said, Thou never gavest me a king.

I have never transgressed thy commandment, he said. In other words, he was telling the Father he wasn't a sinner. He'd never transgressed. He had never sinned.

And he said, Thou never gavest me a king. Sinner, friend, you'll never get to heaven without God giving you sanctity. Without the gift of that great sacrifice, sir, no, the name.

[23 : 47] That's our title, the heaven. And for a man to turn to the Father and say, Thou never gavest me, oh, what a confession. Son, all that I have is thine.

Yes, if you work for it, because Christ always answered people here in the earth according to the vein in which they ask the question. Talk to you privately if you want more on that.

But let's come back to this dear man. He came to the Father and the Father ran. And yesterday at home I spent all day on that, those words, and he kissed me.

just what an assurance. You know, real communion with God is this, it's inexplicable.

I dare say, dear friend, that you could not stand up in a church meeting and tell your brethren and sisters are those moments which you have had with him the best of friends, the altogether lovely one, the best beloved, your tongue would never, mine can't, never be able to describe.

[25 : 13] And I'm sure that we can never describe, nor could the prodigal, what it is to be kissed of our God.

It's the seal, it's the seal of heaven, the seal of forgiveness, the seal of assurance, it is the culminating of all the eternal love of God to a sinner.

He kissed him. And then, now I come to the text, oh dear, poor chap, he tried to pray, and he's like me.

He wasn't very good at prayer, he made mistakes, and I do and you do. He said, make me as one of thy hired servants, oh no, if Jesus once upon thee shine, then Jesus is forever thy.

I do and I have thee. The concentration of the joy of God is here when the father answers this poor lad and says, bring forth the best road.

[26 : 31] before I forget it, let me tell you this. In the text, there's the joy of God and there's the joy of the prodigal, but there's the joy of the Lord's servants.

Because the servants, the father said, let us be married, and it includes the Lord's servants. How many times they're discouraged? How many times they're ready to halt and give up?

But the father says to them, bring it forth. That robe that's been in the wardrobe, that robe which isn't a common robe, it is the best robe.

Bring it out, and let's have that on him. And the dear brother here tonight who preaches the word of God, may he and I and your dear pastor and all who preach the word of God in sincerity of truth, be occupied in nothing less than bringing forth in every sermon the best robe.

That's what we can do. And I sometimes say to my beloved flock, all that I can do is bring that robe forth and I can hold it up, hold it up, try to describe it, the glories, the wonders of the righteousness of God, which righteousness justifies the ungodly, the glories and wonders of this perfect, spotless robe, the creation of which Christ went to the end of the law for righteousness.

[28 : 14] A robe woven in Gethsemane, a robe woven in Calvary, a robe woven in the cries, the groans, the tears of the eternal son, hold it up.

Oh, but what a day it is when the father says, and put it up, put it up. When God, the Holy Spirit, so applies the word that that robe fits that particular sinner, and also the ring.

The time that the scriptures were written, men weren't so much bothered about writing their names to things. What was more important was the interest of the ring. A hired servant would never have a ring, but the son would have the ring.

The ring that was one piece. The seal of that ring upon any document.

Remember some years ago, being with a lawyer friend of mine, who dealt with the estates of Lord Coburn through the years, and he knew that I am very, very fond of history, very fond of history.

[29 : 46] So I'll show you some documents, Mr. O'Reilly. Pitched out all these documents, going back, ooh, 1600, there hung the seals.

The signatures were there, but what was most interesting was to see the impress in the wax. It had lasted all these years of the ring.

And so it is with the child of God. So it is with the child of God. Once that ring of divine love is placed on the finger, and once those shoes of the preparation of peace are placed on the feet, they will be different characters.

For those shoes, the hired servants never had shoes on their feet. I've just been in North Africa, and I find that the servants they walk about with nothing on their feet, but not the son.

The son walks about with shoes on his feet. Dear friend, now we need shoes when we come to work in the ways of God.

[31 : 00] And the Lord said many years ago to his people, thy shoes will be iron and brass, never to wear out. Oh, be persuaded of these things. You say it's a story, and I'm preaching it to you in this way.

I am not greater than my master, not greater than my Lord. If he chose to speak simply to the people, let me speak simply to the people, but underneath our simplicity there is a depth.

There is a depth. depth. And that depth is an eternal depth, because I know of no other way of coming to the Father except this.

And I know no other merriment except this. They began to be merry. And dear friend, when there comes a time, even in an ordinary man's life, a man who knows nothing of the things of God, when, let me put it as they put it, they've had a lucky win, what do they show but bounty, bounty?

bounty? I was thinking tonight, thinking tonight about my dear mother, a typical black country woman.

[32 : 33] If she invited you to tea, she would have the table groaning with food, and feel really disappointed if you did not make an excellent tea.

she was so generous, so bountiful, she never wanted anyone to go away from her table in the slightest bit hungry.

And so it is with God. He will never send anyone away from his table, the gospel table, hungry. Oh Naphtali, Naphtali, satisfied with favor.

And there was a time when dear Naphtali said, Lord, it is enough, it is enough, the bounty of God. And we find here they began to be merry, and I can't find anywhere in the scriptures where it says they ceased to be merry.

No, they never ceased to be merry. And dear friend, your lives and mine, they're such a little vapor. If once we've tasted of this love, if once we've handled and felt these things, then they become far more precious to us than life itself.

A poor, prodigal, faultless, before the throne. Remember us each in this way of mercy and grace.

And whatever, Lord, our pathway is here below. Grant us that favor.

[43 : 19] To stand clothed and shod with the ring of peace on our hand, faultless, before the throne.

Dismiss us in peace and may the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God the Father, the sweet communion of God the Holy Ghost.

Be with each one of you and continue with you unto an eternal day. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen.