

A Double Revival

by John McGregor

This sermon delves into the parable of the Prodigal Son from Luke 15, focusing on the theme of a double revival seen in the lives of both sons. It emphasizes the need for repentance, a turning point, and a triumphant touch from God to bring about revival and restoration in relationships with Him. The message highlights the importance of being close to God, experiencing His love, and seeking genuine revival in our lives.

Scripture: Luke 15:11, Ephesians 2:1, James 4:8, Isaiah 55:6, Ephesians 4:31, James 4:10, Hebrews 4:16, 2 Chronicles 7:14, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Repentance", "Restoration"

Description

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Transcript

Thank you for joining us today, whether here in person or online. You are most welcome. It's always wonderful to meet and to worship the Lord and to exalt his name together, and also to look together into his word and be instructed in the things of God.

We are going to look together in the Gospel of Luke in the 15th chapter today, and the title of the message is A Double Revival, and indeed that's exactly what we see in this passage. So I want to begin by reading from Luke 15 and verse 11 through 32, and you can follow along in your Bible or on the phone or tablet, and may the Lord just grant us great wisdom as we look together at his word. Reading then from Luke 15 beginning at verse 11, then he, Jesus, said, A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me my portion of goods that falls to me.

So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in the land, and he began to be in want.

Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed the swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him

anything. 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? I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.

Make me like one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet, and bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry. For this son was dead, and he is alive again.

He was lost and is found, and they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him 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 fatted calf. But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

So he answered and said to his father, Lo, these many years I have been serving you, I never transgressed your commandments 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. And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

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. And Heavenly Father, we pray that your Spirit would take this, your word, and open it up to our hearts, bring us hope, bring us help, bring us guidance, bring us that sense of conviction as you speak to us about revival in the life of a child of God. Instruct us in the way that we should go.

For these things we ask in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Well, as we come to this text, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem.

Soon he is going to surrender his life as the payment for your sin and for my sin. Soon he will take the way of the cross rather than the way of expediency, and he will teach us what it is to be born again of the Spirit of God. But as he is journeying, he is speaking to his followers, and he's speaking to them about many things.

He's speaking to them about the cost of following him. And you know, salvation is free, but to truly follow Jesus there will be a cost. People may mock you.

They may make fun of how you would serve Christ. They may throw insults at you. You may even suffer persecution for his name.

He was teaching lessons about faith, and how faith is what moves mountains. Walking by faith and not by sight is what a child of God is called to. He was teaching them about his second coming, and oh, how glad we are today that he is coming again, and there is no doubt about it.

But often, you know, as we read this passage, we treat it in just the first part of the story about the son who took all the resources and blew them, and we see it as an evangelistic text. But as you consider this, we want today instead to think about it from a revival perspective, because it is so enlightening when we stop to think of it in those terms. Just think, here is a family that is fragmented and in trouble, and are there not so many families like that today? Hurting, relationships that are broken, issues that have never been resolved, people who have been so proud that they would never bow the knee and ask for forgiveness, and on and on the list goes.

Families are fragmented, and often they are fragmented because of sin, because in our humanity we want our own way, when what we really need is to recognize that Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life. So as we think about this text, what is it that changes things, that brings the family together again? Well, let me suggest that the first thing we want to consider as we look at this story, this text, is that there are actually two lost sons. You say, John, what do you mean by that? I've never heard that before.

But you know, it is so true. Both of these sons knew the father. They both belonged to the father.

They both lived with him. As we begin there in verse 11, we see that they're both there. We see that as the text opens up, the youngest son wanted to get away, wanted to be cut loose, to have what it takes and get out there and enjoy life in all of its fullness and perspectives, to break free.

And you know, generation by generation, that has been the thought. When I get to have my day, when I break free. But the truth is that down the road, all of us have discovered the bitterness that is left.

For freedom has nothing to do with us having our own way. True freedom has to do with knowing and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. The youngest wanted to get out there and to have his own way, because he thought his way was best.

And we live in a time when that is still true. So many people are quite convinced that they know better than God and that their way is the only way. No wonder we love that song that Frank Sinatra sang years ago, I did it my way.

And it's as though we would stand before God and say, well, yeah, I know what you expected, but I did it my way. Dear ones, God's not going to be impressed by that. He calls us to do it his way, for his way is true.

The younger son took the resources, and he left. And for a while, he had what he thought was a good time. I can remember often as a young person talking to people and saying, well, how did the weekend go? Oh, it must have gone great, because I had such a headache, had such a hangover.

Well, how could it be so good if you can't even remember it? Dear ones, here is this son, and he is out there, and he is blowing it big time. But he had no closeness with the father. That relationship is distanced.

He knows his father's still there at home, but he's not walking with his father. So in a way, he is lost to the father. And there are so many Christians who, like this, have just walked away.

Oh, they may not have checked out of the church service. They might still be there on a Sunday for that hour, which is such a task to give up. But in their heart and in their mind, they've checked out.

There's no passion. There's no desire. There's no drive to say, I know what it is that God wants, and that is what I'm going to do.

He wants to grow his kingdom. He wants to bless his church, and I want to be a part of that. Instead, so often, we say, I'll go this far, but I'm not doing any more.

I'm not going any further. Just imagine if Jesus had done that when it came to the night of his arrest and the prospect of the cross the next day. I've gone far enough.

No, that's the time when Jesus said, not my will, but thine, to the father be done. Oh, that son is lost. And perhaps today I'm speaking to someone, and you know in your heart that there is not that same closeness that there used to be.

Used to be an old hymn that we would sing sometimes, where is the blessedness I knew when first I came to Christ, came to know the Lord. Often, that's true, isn't it? We've lost that sense of vibrancy, that sense of closeness, of the power and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. So, in a sense, this son for a time becomes dead to the Father, lost to him.

But there were two lost sons. The older son, he stayed. He stayed there, and he worked away, and he served, but with resentment.

When you look at those verses at the end, you see that although he was obeying the Father, it was not with the heart that was right about it. It was just obedience and becoming more bitter that more things didn't come to him. Never free to enjoy the position and resources, just burdened with responsibility, joyless, powerless, empty.

Religion is like that. If all that we have is just to go through the motions instead of experiencing the living Christ day by day. I had an evangelist friend who years ago when he was preaching put it this way.

He said, you know, sometimes people get upset with us when we are emotional because of Christ, but can you imagine two young people kissing each other out of a sense of stoic duty? No, of course not. It's because of love, and when we are in that distanced position, we are no longer in love with Christ. As we think about this second son, we see yes, physically he was there, but he wasn't there.

Not in his heart. How about you today? In your heart, you have that sense of nearness, that sense of the life of Christ lifting you and leading you. You see, we can be religiously obedient but spiritually dead.

Ephesians 2.1 says, you who were dead in trespass and sin has he made alive. This Christian life is meant to be about life, not death. Living for him, and in him, and with him, and through him.

Life is not just a performance. It is the outflow of all that God would give. So the truth is that neither son loved the father, and both had grown cold and distanced in different ways, but still in the heart, far from the father.

The second thing that we want to look at as we think about this text is that there are turning points in both of these lives. And there are turning points, thank God, today as well. We can know what it is to have life turned by the love of God, and a real joy, and a real hope restored.

Each one of these sons has a fresh encounter with the father. The youngest comes from his emptiness. Everything is broken, and the resources have run out, and there's no place to go.

But there is this memory, this memory of the love, and the home, and the place that he used to have. Oh, I have talked over the years with many people who say things like, I used to know what it was to be so close to God. Is that you? Is there a distance today? Won't you take this opportunity and hear the heartbeat of this message to make a turning point in your life? Just as this prodigal son comes to the place, the old authorized version says when he came to himself, or when he came to his senses, you see, when we're running around looking for fulfillment any place but in God, we're not in the right place.

So he has this moment, and he realizes, I can go home. My father has servants who live much better than I do. I'll go home, and I'll tell them I'm sorry, and I'll become a servant.

Don't you love it? How God works? Nothing had filled this young man's need. All the things he had tried were empty. It disappointed him and abused him, and I wonder how many lives I'm speaking to today.

And that's exactly what life has become—a disappointment, abused, ill thought of, nowhere to go. Won't you do the same as this young man? I remember Dr. E. V. Hill preaching on the prodigal son passage, and I remember so clearly as he said, there came a time when this young man had to hit the pigpen trail. Get out of the pigpen, go back to the Father.

How wonderfully true. I was preaching in a community called Zaneen in South Africa, close to the border with Zimbabwe, and it was a crusade that was held in a rugby field, and so the crowd was there, and I had this privilege of sharing God's Word. And as I gave opportunity to respond, many people came forward out of that crowd to say, I'm so tired of living the way I do.

I need Christ to save me, to forgive me, to give me life. The local pastor who was chairman of the committee that had invited me there was standing beside me, and I turned to him and said to him, perhaps you would take and just guide these ones to Christ. And he stood there and started to cry, and through his tears he said, I can't.

I need to be there with them. You see, what he was saying is that closeness that he once had, had gone, and he knew he needed to come again to Christ. Is that you today? Oh, I remember that evening so well.

You see, that pastor's marriage was in tatters, but within three weeks after he met again with the Lord, they were together and together in Christ. Seeing God at work in their lives and in their ministry is a turning point, and that turning point is the point of repentance. The youngest son displays it so clearly, not in human excitement, not just in the emotion of the moment, not reformation of character, but a move of God.

When we know in our hearts and are convicted of our sin, and that's the problem, isn't it? We want to run a mile rather than be convicted, because when we're convicted, we know that God wants to change some things. Maybe he wants to change some habits, but we've treasured them and kept them all these years, and nobody knows. God knows.

Maybe he wants to change some relationships. Maybe there are friendships he wants to be cut off so that things can be right in other ways. Maybe there are abuses of faith.

Maybe there are substances that we use that we should not use. Whatever it is, my dear friends, in the moving of God's Spirit, even in this moment, you know that God is speaking to your heart, and that the things that are not right there need to be made right. And just as the Spirit of and that conviction comes, you need to respond to it today.

Not to wait for some other more convenient time, but to deal with it right now, right here. And you know, sometimes people have said to me, John, what's the difference between conviction and condemnation? I feel so condemned about my sin and the shame that's in my life. Condemnation is the work of the devil, my friends.

Condemnation has no way out. You just are condemned and condemned and condemned, and there's nowhere to be relieved of it. But when the Holy Spirit of God convicts you, then you know there is a way out, that way of repentance, to just come to him and to trust him.

And then we think about the older son in our text. He also has a personal fresh encounter with his father. He goes to the father in anger.

This is not right. This is unjust that you would do this for that son who's wasted so much. And he comes in resentment and complaining that he is not valued.

After all, he's the one who's done all the work. But the father graciously says, son, all that I have is yours. All.

The father is saying, I would hold nothing back from you. Not a thing. You see, all of that belonged to him, but he had never claimed it.

He had never appropriated it. He had never owned it as his own. Never really received it into his life as to who he was in that relationship with the father.

Both of these sons needed revival. They needed to be brought back to life, as it were. And both had that divine appointment with the father.

And we see the compassion and love and forgiveness and grace of the father in both encounters, don't we? And he has not changed. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. And if you will turn to him today, just as they did, you'll find that compassion.

You'll find that grace. You'll find that forgiveness. You'll find that peace that comes in making again the right relationship and attitude with him.

Lastly, as we think about this text, there is a triumphant touch. The dead, these two sons who are far from the father, have new life. There is revival in both of them, and the family is right again, together with the father.

Right relationships again. You see, revival is not just something tremendous and supernatural that happens that the world will talk about for a few years. It has such a deep personal impact that relationships are restored, that truth becomes precious again, that God is referenced and his name is honored and glory is given to him as lives are changed.

Revival addresses many, many difficulties, and this is why we should seek it with all our hearts. There is the presence of God, just as there is the presence of the father in both of their lives again. There is the love of the word of God, just as they both love to hear the father speak to them.

To one, it's clothe him properly and celebrate, and to the other, it's all that I have is yours. Every bit of it. There has been in both their lives an awareness of sin and a turning from it, an obedience to God.

You see, it is a double revival, isn't it? Let me just read that last verse one last time before we wrap things up. The father is saying to the older son, it was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found. Friend, the Lord Jesus is looking to bring you back to life if you have drifted from him.

So many times in my life, there have been those times where it seems as if coldness comes in, and the love of God begins to diminish in my heart. Perhaps that's you today. Listen.

Jesus invites us to come and to be close with him, to be restored in that relationship with him, to know that turn around, and to experience the power of his Holy Spirit once again directing and guiding our lives. No wonder the apostle Paul, as he writes to the Ephesians, tells him, let all bitterness and resentment fall away. All of those old things only hold us from being close to God.

Draw near to him, says James chapter 4 and verse 8, and he will draw near to you. If you look at that passage in James 4, you'll see it exhorts us to cleanse our lives, and so we come to the father today and say, Lord, I need that washing. I need that cleansing.

I need that turning point. I need that triumphant touch so that you are in complete charge and control. Jesus taught the need for revival as he gave this parable, and in times like these, we need it.

So hear the Lord's voice speaking to your heart today. Draw near to him. Seek him with all your heart, and he will be found by you, says the prophet Isaiah.

It begins with a real look at sin and an honest repentance for those words we've said that we should not have, those things we've done that we should not have, those thoughts that we've allied that we should not have, and that attitude that it doesn't matter. I can do whatever I want. Friend, when we turn to God, we begin to discover what he was, and we begin to find real fulfillment.

A surrender is so necessary. So may we take a moment as we close today and just seek the Lord together. Heavenly Father, as you've been speaking to us from the Scripture today, there are these two lost sons, one who went out into the world and was wounded and broken and beaten and so far removed from you, one who stayed and became performance-driven and who needed to be set free into all the fullness of the Father.

Lord, would you forgive us today? Would you forgive me? For indeed, we all of us desire to come near to you. By your Spirit, Father, draw us to the throne of grace just now. Forgive our sin.

Cleanse us as your people. Cause us to know the stirring and moving and working of your Spirit once again. May revival come as we seek you individually, corporately, and even nationally.

Make yourself known, we pray. Now if you're listening and watching this message and you have no relationship at all with Jesus, you too can turn to him and ask for forgiveness of sin and find his salvation. Just as you say, Heavenly Father, thank you for speaking to me.

I am a sinner. Forgive me for my sin and come live in my heart. Teach me to walk with you.

In Jesus' name we pray. God bless you as you seek him and as he finds you day by day and moment by moment. Amen.

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