

# Parables of Jesus - 05 Four Types of Backsliders

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of repentance and the role of the church in preventing backsliding, highlighting four types of backsliders and the need for a genuine change of heart.*

**Duration:** 50:00

**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:18, Luke 15:3-7, Luke 15:10-24

**Topics:** "Parables"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the topic of backsliding and explores four types of backsliders described in Luke chapter 15. The speaker emphasizes that God's perfect will for believers is to never backslide, as stated in Proverbs 4:18. However, the speaker acknowledges that many believers are not wholehearted and radical, leading them to backslide. The sermon delves into the story of the lost sheep as an example of one type of backslider and highlights the importance of repentance in avoiding backsliding.

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## Transcript

We'll continue our study and turn to Luke's gospel today. We're going to study about backsliding. Four types of backsliders, all of them described in Luke chapter 15 in three parables.

Jesus covered many aspects of the Christian life in the parables. We've already seen 20 of the parables and we look at parable number 21, Luke's gospel, chapter 15, beginning in verse 3. Let me just say a word about backsliding before I continue. There is a verse in the Old Testament and there is another verse in the New Testament, both of which correspond with each other, which teaches us that God's perfect will for us is that we should never backslide.

The Old Testament verse is Proverbs 4 and verse 18, which says that the path of a righteous man is like the shining light of the sun that increases in brightness from sunrise to its midday position. I'm paraphrasing those words. And you know, sunrise is when we are born again, come out of darkness.

And the noonday position is when Christ comes again and we are changed into his likeness. And all of you know that the sun never backslides. It just keeps going up and up and up and up and up.

It doesn't even backslide for a second. And that is God's will for every one of us. From the time we are born again to the time we become like Jesus when he comes again, there should be a steady growth,

slowly, steadily being conformed to his likeness.

The New Testament verse is 2 Corinthians 3 and verse 18, which says that the Holy Spirit transforms us from one degree of glory to another. So the glory doesn't decrease. It's from one degree of glory to another, a higher degree.

It's like a student going through a class. He finishes the first standard and then the second standard and the third standard. He goes from one class to another.

Each class is higher. So in God's perfect will for your life and mine, he doesn't believe in backsliding. He doesn't want us to backslide.

But God knows that most believers are not wholehearted and radical. And so they do backslide. And so here we read about four types of backsliders, different reasons why they backslide.

Number one is the story of the lost sheep. Verses 3 to 7, a man had a hundred sheep and one of them was lost. Doesn't he leave the 99 and go and search for that one until he finds it? You know, when I speak to little children and seek to present the gospel to them, I tell them, even if Jesus, even if you were the only bad child in the whole world, and all the other people in the world were good, and you were the only bad child, bad person, Jesus would have come from heaven just for you.

And little children understand that. And I think we who are grown up also need to understand that. The love of Jesus for us is personal.

If all 99 were righteous and only one was lost, and that one was you, Jesus would still have come searching for you. God's love is very personal. Sometimes we read a verse like, God so loved the world, and that's six billion people today.

And we say, well, I'm just a small part of that world. But when you come to a parable like this, we see that God's love is personal to you. And we must never forget that, because that's what gives us a sense of value and worth, that the Son of God would come seeking for you, even if you were the only person.

God's love for us is very intense. He said, even the hairs on our head are numbered, how much more we ourselves. And when this sheep is found and brought back, what actually is that process called? Jesus described it in verse 7 as repentance.

There'll be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance. So that one sheep that is lost, when he comes back, that process is called repentance. So the sheep was originally a part of the fold.

This is not a new sheep coming into the fold, no. This is not talking essentially of an unbeliever. It's talking about the sheep, part of the hundred.

He was, this little sheep was in the fold, but got lost and came back through repentance. And that is emphasized again in verse 10. The message in all these parables on backsliding is that there is only one way to come back, and that is through repentance.

Unfortunately, the message of repentance is not preached as much as it should be in the world today. That's a very sad thing. Generally speaking, most Christian preachers today talk about faith.

Believe, believe, believe, believe. On television, they tell you to believe. In the books, they tell you to believe.

You go to any bookshop, Christian bookshop, and search through the books. I guarantee you'll find a hundred books on faith for one book on repentance. And you'll be lucky if you find even one book on repentance.

What does that indicate? The devil has done a tremendous work in Christianity, because he knows that if people believe without repentance, their life is going to be very shallow. And many people are not even properly converted, because they are not told to repent. Repentance, repentance.

Jesus preached repentance. John the Baptist preached repentance. Have you seen these relay races? Four into a hundred meters relay, where one person runs and then passes the baton to the next person.

The next person takes the baton and runs around, gives it to the next person. That's what John the Baptist did. He preached repentance, and when he died, or when he got imprisoned, he passed it on to Jesus.

And Jesus continued with that message of repentance. And when he went up to heaven, he gave it to Peter. And Peter got up on the day of Pentecost and said, repent.

And the apostles preached repent. But somewhere along these 2,000 years, somebody dropped that baton. And now we're running without it.

A lot of people. You get disqualified if you run that race without a baton. You have to have that, and repentance.

And do you know the last message that Jesus preached? Do you know where you find it? You don't find it in the Gospels. You find it in Revelation chapter 2 and 3, to the churches. And where five of those churches were backslidden, he told them, repent, repent, repent.

That's the message Jesus even preached from heaven. Why is it missing? It's the work of the devil. And that's why people continue to backslide, because they don't repent.

They come to the Lord and say, I'm sorry, but they don't radically repent. Now why did this sheep go astray? This sheep did not go astray in rebellion. He didn't walk up to the shepherd and say, I've had enough of your flock, of being in your fold.

No. This sheep went astray through carelessness. Maybe, you know, that's how some believers go astray.

They're careless about something in their life. They're careless in what they look at, what they read. They're careless when they watch television.

Or the sheep could have gone astray through lack of fellowship. That means it just wandered off by itself. And it's a very dangerous thing when you start wandering off by yourself, and you don't value the fellowship of the flock in which God has placed you.

Very dangerous. That's how the sheep got lost, through carelessness. You know, this carelessness is something where you slip slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly, and finally you're lost.

That's how backsliding comes. Backsliding doesn't come like that. The sheep didn't go astray all of a sudden.

Slowly drifted away, and then finally found it was lost. It didn't know where it was, when you don't value fellowship. But the way back is through repentance.

So I want to say this, that whenever, the way to avoid this is, whenever your conscience tells you something is wrong, turn back immediately. I want to say one more thing here before we go on, and that's in verse 7. We read about 99 righteous persons who need no repentance. Who are the people who don't need any repentance? Have you ever heard of such people? Jesus said that.

99 righteous persons who don't need repentance. And he's not talking about the angels in heaven. He's talking about sheep on earth.

Can I become one of these 99 righteous persons who need no repentance? Why do they not need repentance? Because they have already repented. I don't mean once at the beginning of their life. Their life is a continuous series of repentances.

In other words, they are repenting every day. They're judging themselves every day. They're not judging other people.

They're judging themselves. And because they judge themselves every day, as soon as they sin, they repent. They don't need any repentance.

You know, it's like if you get an injury, you immediately put some medicine. That's how we should deal with sin. As soon as we sin, confess it, forsake it.

If you hurt somebody, go to that person and ask forgiveness. And you have repented. And if you live like that every day, you are a person who doesn't need repentance.

And that is how Jesus said every church should be. This 99 people represents a church where everybody is living in daily repentance. That's the type of church we must build in every part of India.

Churches where if you have 99 people, all 99 have been taught by their leaders to judge themselves and stop judging other people. In front of my table at home, I have a little thing written up. I just print it out and put it on front of me to remind me.

It says the happiest people in the world are those who judge themselves every day. Always and never judge others. I remind myself of that every day.

The happiest people in the world are those who judge themselves always and never judge others. And I want to say, I'm a very happy man. I have learned to judge myself every day.

Every sermon that I preach, I go home and judge myself. Lord, did that please you? Was there something unnecessary there? Did I bore people? Did I waste time? Did I seek my own honor? Was it the way you wanted me to speak? Was there an anointing on it? If you did that for every single sermon you ever preached, every sermon will become better than the previous one. Why is it we have so many boring preachers in Christendom today? They don't judge themselves.

It's just one area. We got to judge ourselves in many areas. Have I hurt somebody? You went through a time of conversation with other people, you need to go home and judge yourself.

Lord, did I gossip about somebody there? Gradually, your conversation will become pure. If you judge yourself, gradually your life gets purer and purer and purer, and you become part of this 99 people who don't need any repentance. Now, if you don't have a church like that, what is the condition of many churches today? They're fighting and quarreling and all types of diseases in there, spiritual diseases.

There are not 99 people who need no repentance. I would say, if you bring a lost sheep into some of those type of churches, they'll have more problems when they come in. And that sheep will get more sicknesses after coming into that flock, because they're all sick.

I would say in such a case, it's better that sheep stays out there for a little longer. He's safer there than in some churches. It's true.

In one of the villages in India, there was a non-Christian man who was converted. In that village, there was only one church. It wasn't a very good one.

And when he got converted and he accepted Christ, he asked the man who led him to the Lord, now that I'm converted, do I have to join this church where everybody knows they're always fighting with each other? What is the answer? You tell him, yes, you have to join that? No, he's far safer outside. Some sheep are far safer outside. It's no use bringing them into a church where people are fighting and quarreling.

The sheep must be brought into a church where people have judged themselves and cleansed themselves. And that's our responsibility to build such churches, so that those sheep can be brought in. A lot of people are reaching out to bring the sheep in, bring the sheep in, bring the sheep in.

But to what type of church? What type of flock? That poor sheep gets more sicknesses coming inside here than it got out there. That's the condition of a lot of evangelism today. And that's why I believe we need to do a lot in the churches, so that we can have good fellowships into which to bring these lost sheep.

Okay, we go to the next parable. Luke 15 verses 8 to 10. Here it speaks about a woman who had 10 coins and one of them was lost.

Now, here the woman is a picture of the church. Now, when a sheep is lost, it was through its own carelessness and lack of fellowship. But here, when a coin is lost, supposing you have 10 coins and you lose one of them, that's not due to the fault of the coin.

That's due to your carelessness. And some believers go astray, because the church is careless and does not care for them, because the leaders don't care for them. You know, whenever any brother in our church has fallen in some way or fallen away, I always go before the Lord and I say, Lord, please show me, was it due to some fault of mine? It's very easy to blame him and say, oh well, he's not wholehearted, that's why he fell away.

Maybe that's true. Or he was careless, or he didn't value fellowship, maybe he was a sheep. But I say, maybe he was a coin and not a sheep.

Maybe he fell away because I did not care for him enough. Maybe he fell away because I did not pray for him enough. Some believers go astray, because the church does not care for them.

And that can also happen, and we've got to take our responsibility. Remember, Jesus told Simon Peter, care for my lambs, tend my lambs, he said in John chapter 10. Feed my sheep, feed my lambs, tend my lambs, take care of the little ones.

And only such people are qualified to be leaders in a church. From this we learn how this woman lit a lamp. What does it mean to light a lamp? In the New Testament, the light always refers to the life of Jesus.

John chapter 1 verse 4, it says, in him was life, and that life was the light of men. That is the light we have to light in the church. See, the coin was lost because there was no light.

And in the darkness, it's very easy to lose the coins. And when you have a church where there is darkness, where the life of Jesus is not being manifest and proclaimed, it's very easy to lose the coins. So this woman did the sensible thing, she lit a lamp.

And that's the way to find the lost coins. We've got to light, we've got to bring back into the church the life of Jesus. Not just doctrine, not just activity, but the light, the life of Jesus.

And she lit that lamp, and she swept the house. It says in verse 8, boy, what a need there is to sweep the house in the church. And that light, a primary aspect of that life of Jesus is compassion.

The Bible says Jesus was moved with compassion and healed the sick. He was moved with compassion and began to teach. Everything Jesus did for people was a result of a compassion in his heart.

And I would say we can never serve the Lord if we don't have compassion in our heart for these lost sheep and the lost coins especially. We need to light a lamp and sweep the floor clean. Get rid of all the dust because some of these coins are lost because there's such a lot of garbage inside the house.

Get rid of the garbage and you'll find the coin. That's what we need to do in our churches. Sweep the house, light the lamp, and find those lost coins which have been lost through the carelessness of the church.

You know, the church does not proclaim the life of Jesus. What happens is they get attracted to material things. That's how Satan draws so many people away.

If the life of Jesus is not proclaimed, if you don't proclaim in a church, you cannot love God and money. Jesus loved only God. He didn't love money.

You don't proclaim that and you don't, that means you don't light a lamp. What happens? People go astray, get lost through the love of money. So when she found it, she said, rejoice with me and there's joy in the presence of the angels of God.

Verse 10, over one sinner who repents. As I said, this is the type of leader that God looks for. I don't know whether you remember that story in 1 Samuel chapter 17.

Before David went to fight Goliath, he told Saul, King Saul, he said, I'll tell you something King about my private life. That's why I know I can fight Goliath. I used to look after my father's sheep.

He said, you read it in 1 Samuel 17. And one day a lion came and took one of the little lambs away. And you know what David said? David said, you know what I did? I went after the lion.

See, the lion is a picture of the devil. Takes away one of the little lambs from the church. What should the shepherd do? It's no use criticizing the lamb.

Supposing David had gone to the little lamb, which is inside the lion's mouth and say, you should have been careful and given him a big lecture. By the time you give a lecture to the lamb, the lamb has gone inside the lion's mouth. David was sensible.

There's no use giving a lecture to the lamb right now. Let me fight with the lion. And he killed the lion, delivered the lamb.

That's a picture of how God wants leaders to be. Don't just criticize that person. Fight with the devil who has grabbed that person.

To have a compassion and a care. I remember hearing a story. It's not a true story, but it's a parable, let's say.

It's a Jewish legend. Legend means something which is not in the Bible. But it's one of those stories they made, but it's a very beautiful story.

It says that when Moses was looking after the sheep of Jethro in the wilderness, one day he saw a little lamb just had left the flock and had gone near a river because it was thirsty. Small little lamb. Moses saw it only after it reached the river, which was some distance away.

And Moses ran and picked up the lamb and said, if I had known you were thirsty, I would have carried you here to the water instead of making you walk all that distance. And a voice from heaven said, truly you are fit to lead Israel. Who is fit to lead God's people? The one who has compassion for the little lambs.

Okay, let's go now to the third backslider. And that's Luke chapter 15 and verses 11 to 24. You know the well-known story of the prodigal son.

Here is another person who is not a unbeliever. He's a son. God is his father.

God is a good father. But this son had a spirit of rebellion. He didn't go astray like the sheep.

He didn't go astray like the coin. The sheep was through carelessness or lack of fellowship. The coin was lost through the failure and neglect of the church.

But the prodigal son went astray through rebellion. Some people backslide like that. They are proud.

They can't submit to authority. They think they know so much. Particularly if they are rich or they are clever or intelligent, such people are in tremendous danger because they don't fit through the needle's eye.

They are proud. And they go astray through a spirit of rebellion. You know how a lot of young people are.

They think they know more than their parents just because they got a little education. Maybe their parents were not graduates and the children became graduates and they thought they knew more. So this man turned around to his father and says, I've had enough of staying in this house.

I'm going. And his father must have pleaded with him. Don't go.

You'll make a mess of your life. Be careful. But he went.

Look at his attitude in Luke 15. What did he say to the father? Verse 12. Two words.

Father, give me. That's the mark of a carnal believer. He goes to God and says, give me.

Give me what I want. A lot of believers, their prayer is basically two words. Give me.

Give me this and give me that. Usually material things. Jesus said, when you pray, you shouldn't pray like that.

Give and all should come later. You first pray, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Forget all this. Give me. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Then come to give me or give us our daily bread. Give us forgiveness. Give us deliverance.

There is a place for it. Provided we first pray, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done. A lot of believers don't know how to pray. And I'd say it's far better to pray in a proper way for one minute than to go one hour praying in an improper way.

Now this son is a perfect picture of carnal Christians who say, give me, give me, give me, give me. And when you live like that, you gradually become a backslider. You can never be a backslider if your prayer is, Lord, every day you pray, hallowed be thy name, Lord.

That's what I pray first. That's the uppermost desire in my heart that your kingdom should come. Your will should be done in my life as it's done on earth.

You pray that every day sincerely from your heart. I guarantee you'll never backslide. But if your prayer always consists of give me this and give me that and give me God, give me this and give me the other thing, like a lot of Christians are being taught today to ask God for cars and houses and lands and this, that, and the other.

I guarantee they'll never become spiritual. They're not spiritual. They're just money lovers, lovers of this earth, just like this young man.

And when he got what he wanted from the father, he went and spent it on himself. This is the mark of a carnal Christian. What he gets from God, he uses for himself.

It may be a spiritual gift. Do you know the number of people in the world today who got a gift of preaching and they use it for themselves to make money, to get honor? They got a gift of healing from God and they use it to exalt themselves and make a lot of money and live like rich people. Is that why God gave them that gift? No.

They are all prodigal sons, even though they may be standing on platforms and preaching like great preachers. They're all backsliders. You may not be able to discern it.

I can. I'm not impressed by these backsliders who stand up there under the spotlight. What God has given you must not be used for yourself.

You know what the devil told Jesus in the temptation? God has anointed you. Now use that power to make the stones into bread. And Jesus said, no.

What was he saying? I will not use the power God has given me for myself. But when 5,000 people needed bread, he used that power for other people. That is the mark of a spiritual man.

The power that he gets from God, he never uses for himself to make money or to make honor, to get honor or anything for himself, not even bread when he was hungry for 40 days. But he would readily make it for other people who are hungry for one day. That's a spiritual man.

He uses everything God has given him for others. But this prodigal son was not like that. It says he took and he went and he spent it all on himself.

His honor, his comfort, his pleasure. That's the mark of a backslider. A backslider is a man who is not careful with money.

He wastes money. You know that money is a gift of God. Don't pray that you'll get too much money because you'll have to answer to God for more in the final day.

Leave it to God to decide how much he should give you. I have served the Lord now for 36 years, full time. I've never once asked God to give me money.

I never asked people for money either. God decides how much to give me year by year and I say I'm happy. Whatever you decide, I'm happy.

I'm happy to ride a scooter today. I'm perfectly happy. I'm happy to walk if God tells me to walk.

We have to be content with what God gives us. Otherwise, if we waste, you'll find that you lose the anointing of God on your life. Don't look at other preachers.

My dear brothers and sisters, let me give you one good exhortation. Don't even look at great preachers. Look at Jesus.

See how he did it. Follow his example. So here we see a person taking and wasting it on himself and the thing you see here is that the father never went after him.

Isn't that interesting? The shepherd went after the sheep but the father never went after the son. You need to distinguish between the sheep and the son. A lost sheep and a lost son are not the same type of backsliders.

One went astray through carelessness. If a brother in the church goes astray like a sheep, I must go and look for him, bring him back. But if a brother in the church goes away in a spirit of rebellion, I will never go after him because this parable teaches me don't go after him.

Let him reach the level of the pigs. Let him learn a lesson and let him come back in repentance. You know the father, father's love is sometimes shown in strictness.

The father never sent any food packets to his son. He never sent any money orders to his son. If he heard your son is now very poor, he's lost everything, he's with the pigs, the father still will not send any money orders.

He still will not send any food packets. Why? What do you think would have happened to that son if the father kept on sending money orders to him? He'd never have come back. There is a love which we can show to other people which is foolish.

When God is disciplining a man, I will not help him. I will let him suffer. Otherwise, I will hinder him from going back to his father's house.

Supposing I was living in that far country and I saw this prodigal son and I kept on giving him money and food, he would never go back to his father's house. I would think I'm doing, showing him a lot of love but I'm not. I'm hindering God's purpose.

There's a lot of foolish love like that among believers sometimes. We need to have discernment whom to help and whom not to. That's what we learned from this story and because the father was wise and he allowed his son to suffer, he came back.

God allows people to suffer sometimes because they've gone astray in their own way. It's like the story I heard of a man who was a businessman and he was very active in the church but as his business prospered, he made more and more and more money and he stopped coming to the meetings. He was busy.

His business was on Sundays as well and it went on like that and the elders would call him and he would never come and he had three sons. One day, his youngest son was bitten by a snake. Very poisonous wiper and the doctors gave up all hope.

Then he called for the pastor of the church to come and pray for him and the pastor was a wise man. He prayed, Lord, we thank you for this snake because what I tried to do for six months and I did not succeed, this snake has done in one minute. Made all these people think about you.

Who said snakes were bad? Snakes are good. God created them with a purpose to turn people to him. God allows some of his children to suffer.

Some get cancer and they repent and become Christians. Was that cancer a good thing or not? Sure. You know many many things God has allowed.

You wonder why? You understand. Why does God allow his son to be among the pigs? To make him repent, to come to an end of himself. Maybe he got so many sicknesses.

Good. Let him get it so that he goes back to his father and when he went back to his father, we read the father ran and welcomed him. It's the only place in the bible where you see God running.

Isn't that good to see God running? It's the only place in the whole bible where you see God running and he runs to welcome a lost son who's coming back. Have you noticed one thing? It says here in Luke chapter 15 when the son was far away. Verse 20.

Far away. He must have looked very different after all these years. Thin skin and bones, beard grown long and dirty.

Only a father would recognize him as his son. So far away. How did the father know he was coming that day? Have you ever thought? He never sent a letter.

I'm coming. How did the father see him a distance away? That teaches me something. That every day the father would stand and look out.

Every day for many years he had looked and that's how God looks for backsliders. And when he sees them coming far away, he runs to welcome them. That's how God is.

He's a good God. And the son came and no excuses. He said, dad I've sinned.

And he was going to say I'm not fit to be a son. I'm fit to be living in the servant's quarters. And the father said, no, no, no.

I don't want to hear anything. Bring the best robe. Put it on him.

That's a picture of the righteousness of Christ which we are clothed with immediately. Put a ring on his hand. That's a picture of the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Put it immediately. But people say, wait, don't you, don't you want to test him out for six months? Put him in the servant's quarters for six months and see whether he's really repented? And the dad says, no, I believe he's repented. Isn't, isn't God good that instead of putting you in the servant's quarters, he makes you sit at his table as soon as you come? Anoints you with the Holy Spirit straight away.

Puts the righteousness of Christ on you straight away. And puts shoes on your feet. The shoes we read in Ephesians 6 are the preparation of the gospel of peace.

The readiness to share with others what God has done for us. It says he came to his senses and he decided to go back in verse 17. Do you know that a man comes to his senses only when he's repented? Until he's repented.

He hasn't come to his senses. He's off his head. When he came back, he found that the father welcomed him and gave him a seat at his right hand.

And the father blessed him and took care of him. Now the fourth backslider is the elder son. Sometimes a lot of people don't think he's a backslider, but he's a worse backslider than the younger son.

And the elder son is a picture of those religious people, the Pharisees, who look down on others. How do we say he was a backslider? Because you know his backsliding was inward. The other person's backsliding was outward.

This fellow's backsliding was inward. And inward backsliding is not so easily seen. You know that.

Supposing you started going to the cinemas and fooling around with the opposite sex, everybody would see it. They'd call you a backslider straight away if you get drunk. But what about inward backsliding? Some of you may be backsliding right now.

Can anybody see it? Only you. That's the elder son. How do we know he was backsliding inwardly? What did we say was the mark of this first son's backsliding? He said, give me, give me.

Now the interesting thing is that the older son never said to the father, give me. So he looks more spiritual. But when this moment of pressure comes, where his younger brother has come back and everybody's so happy, this older brother is jealous.

He should have been very happy. My younger brother has come back. But he's not happy.

He was jealous because till now he was the center of attention in the house. Now he's no longer the center of attention. Somebody else is the center of attention.

You know all of us like to be the center of attention. And now somebody else was taking that place. A younger person.

You know like when the fire fell on Abel's sacrifice, Cain was jealous. When David killed Goliath, Saul was jealous. The same story here.

The elder brother was jealous when the younger brother was being accepted. And then what does he come and tell the father? Listen to this. He also says, give me.

That's the interesting thing. He says in verse 29 to the father when the father comes out to meet him. Look, for so many years I've served you.

I've never neglected a command of yours and you have never given me. So what was he waiting for all these years? The same old give me. He was a backslider inside but he carefully hid it.

But it came out in this moment. You know God has amazing ways of bringing out what you try to hide for many years. And when it comes out, you discover what you really are.

You know sometimes we say, well I'm actually a good person but that fellow irritated me so much that I lost my temper. No, you were always like that. That fellow just brought it out.

You know like this illustration I've heard. Supposing you're carrying a glass of very sweet orange juice, okay. And somebody shakes you really hard.

Will any bitter water come out of that? Yes or no? No. If somebody shakes you really hard and bitter water comes out, what does it prove? It proves that the glass was full of bitter water all the time. So don't blame that other person.

Don't say he irritated me and I got angry. No, he irritated me and I discovered what was inside me all the time. Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord. Thank God for that fellow who came and irritated me. Otherwise I would have fooled myself that I had orange juice inside me all the time when I had some bitter water inside all the time.

Thank God that this younger son came and manifested what was really hidden inside this elder brother backsliders heart. Otherwise he'd never have known that he was a backslider. Now he discovered jealousy.

Now he discovered pride. Now he discovered no compassion for his younger brother. Now he discovered this give me spirit was inside him also.

He discovered so many things and I'll tell you something. When God blesses somebody else more than you, you will discover a lot of things inside your heart which you think is not there. When somebody else gets a position you wanted to get, when somebody else marries someone you wanted to marry, you will discover you will discover a lot of things inside your heart you thought you were so spiritual and you discover in that one moment you are not so spiritual as you thought you were.

Good. Isn't it good to discover those things so that we humble ourselves and come to the Lord and say, Lord, I'm a sinner. I'm just a rotten old sinner.

But this elder brother did not repent. Out of these four backsliders, three of them repented. One never repented.

Isn't that sad? And some backsliders are like that. The sheep came back. The coin was found.

The lost son came back. What about this fellow? What is the end of the story? He's outside the house. The first will be last and the last will be first.

So Jesus was saying all these fellows who look so holy and so righteous, one day you'll get a big shock when you discover that inside their heart they were worse. You know in Romans chapter 1 it speaks about the younger son. Romans chapter 2 speaks about the older son.

Have you ever discovered that? You read Romans chapter 1 and chapter 2. Romans chapter 1 is dealing with the worldly sinner and Romans chapter 2 is dealing with the religious sinner. It's the younger son and the older son. And then he says in Romans chapter 3, both are sinners.

Everybody has come short of the glory of God. The younger son and the older son. So all need salvation if they humble themselves and acknowledge.

What did that younger son do? He said, father I have sinned against heaven. Verse 21. And in your sight I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.

But the elder brother could not say that. You know all that's required is to acknowledge your sin. Acknowledge.

That's all. You may think that that person does not deserve to be blessed. The elder brother felt the younger brother should not get a blessing.

But if God blesses him, that means God's opinion is different from yours. And who do you think is right? God or you? Why not humble ourselves and say, Lord you blessed him. That means I thought he should not be blessed.

But you blessed him. Sometimes you know people in one denomination think that God should not bless people in another denomination. And then you find that God blesses those people in that other denomination.

Just humble yourself and say, God thinks those people are okay. You may not think so, but God thinks so. Praise the Lord.

Rejoice. If somebody has a robe on his body and ring in his hand. Now we come to the fourth parable here in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 33.

The last parable number 24. Where Jesus spoke about the kingdom of heaven. Verse 33 being like leaven.

Matthew chapter 13 verse 33. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven or yeast. You know if you put yeast into wheat.

If you don't put yeast, it comes out like a chapati or a pancake. If you put yeast into it, it blows up like bread. That's what he's talking about here.

Leaven. Leaven is yeast. Throughout the Bible, it's always a picture of sin.

A woman takes leaven and hides it in the three packs of meal till the whole thing is leavened. See this teaches us that a little bit of sin. 1 Corinthians 5. A little leaven leavens the whole lump it says.

A little corruption can easily bring backsliding into any church. Who is this woman? You read about this woman in Revelation chapter 17. Babylon.

The mother of harlots. Spiritual harlotry. James chapter 4. He says you adulteresses.

This woman is a religious Christian system called Babylon which talks about Jesus but which is which loves the world and loves money. And this woman has put a little corruption, leaven, sin into the church so the whole thing gets leavened. A little corruption can pollute a whole church and we can sit in a church and you can see this happening.

You got to be watchful. If you are not watchful, if you don't make sure that okay I'm not gonna let this leaven come inside me. I want to tell you there's leaven in every church.

You'll never find a perfect church. I hope you know that. Have you heard the story of the young man who went to a preacher and said I'd like to find a perfect church.

I haven't found one perfect church yet and the preacher said well I've never found a perfect church either but if you find a perfect church don't join it because the moment you join it it won't be perfect anymore. So you won't find a perfect church but you got to make sure that that imperfection and sin in people around you the leaven that is spreading does not come inside you. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 5 23 keep yourself pure.

Backsliding spreads very easily like leaven and we can say that three pecks of meal it said here could refer to all the groups in Christianity. Babylon has done his work in every group. Backsliding can take place whichever denomination you sit in.

Watch your heart. Keep yourself pure and you don't need to backslide. Let's pray.

Again I want to invite you to respond to the word of God that you have heard this evening. Is there backsliding that the Lord has pointed out in you? Acknowledge your sin and say Lord I have sinned. Have mercy on me.

Turn to the Lord. All you have to do is you don't have to make a list of your sins just say I have sinned. God is ready to forgive you immediately.

He runs to welcome you to put a robe on you to put a ring on your hands. Heavenly Father help us each one to cling to you to judge ourselves every day so that we are like those 99 people who don't need any repentance because we repent every day. We pray in Jesus name.

Amen.

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