

LOST Part 3: Wasted - 02.14.10

Intro - Tonight we come to the final parable in Luke 15, the parable of the lost son, the prodigal son. Most famous parable. Most well known and, sadly, most discounted by today's Christians. We know the story and don't identify ourselves with any of the characters:

1. The prodigal - Nope, I'm now in the found, Christian, not lost.
2. The father - Nope, I'm not God.
3. The oldest son - Nope, I'm not religiously exclusive.

The only one, I think, we can be sure of is #2. We're not God.

Tonight I want to talk about the idea of "Wasted." We read in Luke 15:13 KJV that the younger son wasted his substance with riotous living. You and I may not be guilty of riotous living, but we certainly can be guilty, even as Christ followers of *wasting our substance* - of not living up to the kind of glorious life that God had so graciously given us. Who among us tonight would say that they have become all that God has in mind for them. Which of us could not improve in some way or another?

This evening we will consider ONE KEY QUESTION that we learn from the 1st part of the prodigal son story, And then, like a single diamond that has many different sides, we'll turn this one question around in our minds to view it from 5 different angles, 5 different versions.

Version #1 MY WAY or GOD'S WAY ?

"The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them." Luke 15:12
ESV

This even today would be considered an outrageous request. For the younger son to ask for his share of his inheritance, his portion of the property, while his father was still alive was just like saying, "I wish you were dead." Especially when you consider that the second word for "property" is different than the first.

βίος -life; (1) of earthly life in its daily functions, (2) the means of subsistence property, goods, one's living.

For the father to give up some of his "property" would be to give up a substantial portion of his very life, the very means of his subsistence. The younger brother is saying, "I don't need you any longer... I can get along just fine on my own." Not Your Way. My way. Even as Christians, we daily find ourselves with this same choice. Even OT Joshua...

"Choose today whom you will serve... As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15 NLT

You may say to yourself, I've already made my choice. I have chosen God's way. But what about the decisions you make? Do you go to God? Do u live a theoretical Christianity little different than practical atheism?

"Fools say to themselves, 'There is no God.' ...
The Lord looks down from heaven at human beings to see if there are any who are wise, any who worship him." Psalm 14:1-2 GNT

Worship is more than singing. Serving. Living in relationship. Guidance.

“There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way that leads to death.” Proverbs 14:12 NET

We have the tendency to make this theological. We orient its meaning around salvation. We interpret, “one way to get to heaven.” But this could be applied to every aspect of our lives - our physical lives, eating, exercising, sleeping, work time, play time. Our emotional lives - our relationships with spouse, kids, parents, not to mention bosses and friends. How can we take this and apply it to all aspects of life? **How can I keep my decision to follow God fresh, day to day?**

Version #2 _____ **WANDER** _____ or _____ **ABIDE** _____ ?

“Not long after that, the younger son packed up all he had. Then he left for a country far away...” Luke 15:13a NIRV

Why did the younger son decide to pack up everything and leave? Why did he want to get as far away as possible? Because he didn't want to have Dad watching him, interfering. Perhaps didn't want guilt to slow him down. Don't we sometimes do the same thing?

Again, don't be too quick to answer. You may think you haven't moved away from God, but there are probably some parts of your life that you still have all “packed up.” We all have those monsters in our lives that we don't want anyone to know about, especially God. But how then will we ever be ourselves? **How can we get “unpacked” with God?**

PLAY “The Answer Man” Movie Clip (1:25)

Can you identify? “But I don't want it there... I want it with all my other monsters.” God really does want the real you. He's not afraid of your monsters. He's saying: “Just try it out. Consider it an experiment.”

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.
John 15:4 ESV

What does “abide in me” really mean? You and I can't ever grow and become fruitful, grow into the beautiful creatures God intended unless we abide. Parallel Bibles can help.

Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. Jn 15:4a MSG
Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Jn 15:4a NIV

It means you can be yourself with God. Be real. Authentic. Display your monsters. Unpack your dirty linens. Trust God to love you warts and all. I know some of you have trust issues. But you must learn to trust God. Let him in on your most secret desires, your most guilty pleasures - even those things you think to be wrong. Trust God to heal you in loving way. **To live “unhealed” “packed up” would be such a WASTE!**

Version #3 _____ **WASTED** _____ or _____ **PURPOSED** _____ ?

“... and there wasted his substance with riotous living.” Luke 15:13b KJV

This quite literally means he wasted his life, he squandered his subsistence, his living, his bios. How are you doing here?

The greatest tragedy would be to not make it to heaven. But there is a 2nd worst tragedy. To make it in, but to have to admit that we wasted this precious life that God gave us. **The Bible includes Ecc. for reason**
“Utterly Meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” Ecclesiastes 1:2 NIV

And what could make everything “meaningless?” To live our lives in exclusion from God, **obsessed with only ourselves.**

“Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life.” Romans 8:6 MSG

One of the greatest and most life-transforming truths we can learn about Christianity is that God didn’t “save” us just to get us into Heaven. He has a plan for us, a purpose. **He chose us for that purpose!**

“God chose us to be his own people in union with Christ because of his own purpose.” Ephesians 1:11b GNT

“God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us to do good works, which God planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.” Ephesians 2:10 NCV

So how can I stop wasting my life, feeling unfulfilled? I need to start being a student of how God made me. If it’s true that God made me the way I am, I need to discover my SHAPE for ministry, spiritual gifts, heart and passion, abilities, personality, and experiences. We read three things in Ephesians 2:10 that are remarkable:

1. God made me the way I am. I may have corrupted it, but there are some natural aspects of who I am that is God-created.
2. God made me for good works, living out my life doing them.
3. God planned this for me *in advance!*

So how can I figure out this purpose? Not by wandering, ABIDING!

“It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for.” Ephesians 1:11a MSG

Another way of thinking of this Abiding time is to invest...

Version #4 SPENT or INVESTED ?

“After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing.” Luke 15:14 HCSB

If we get #3 wrong (wasted/purposed) then this one follows naturally. If everything is about immediate gratification, pleasing/obsessing about self then I’ll tend to see my resources in terms of today instead of tomorrow, now instead of forever, temporal instead of eternal = emptiness.

“Let them no longer fool themselves by trusting in empty riches, for emptiness will be their only reward.” Job 15:31 NLT

“The first servant reported, ‘Master, I invested your money and made ten times the original amount!’” Luke 19:16 NLT

How do I INVEST my resources instead of SPEND? Focus on Eternals:

3 Eternals: God

God’s Word

God’s People

“The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out - but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity.” 1 John 2:17 MSG

Don't you want to be set free from the wanting, wanting, wanting? Don't you want to be SET for eternity? Circle that word SET. How do we do what God wants and be SET for eternity? Simple acrostic:

See value with my God eyes - Warren Buffett sees value where others don't. Look beyond yourself. Ask yourself how does God see another person. Look beneath the surface.

Expect opportunities to serve. Know that at some point today, God will give me the chance to invest into His eternal kingdom.

Take strategic risk. Bible is filled with risk takers for God.

Version #5 **APATHETIC** or **COMPASSIONATE** ?

“The son was so hungry that he wanted to eat the pods the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.” Luke 15:16 NCV

This is the world we live in. Apathetic. Uncaring. But not God the Father.
“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion.”
Luke 15:20 ESV

We'll talk a great deal more about this in 2 weeks, but if we want to be more like God, then we need to be more compassionate.

“You have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.” James 5:11 NRSV

“Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion.”
Colossians 3:12 HCSB

Some of you are more naturally compassionate and merciful. Mary Kay is like that. But that doesn't mean that we who are not naturally compassionate and merciful have an excuse. We have God the Holy Spirit living within us. Even if we don't feel compassionate, we have access to God's compassion. It is a CHOICE!. Circle words “put on.” We are supposed to put on God's compassion in the same way we put on clothing. I am not naturally dressed. I'm naturally naked. I decide, I choose to put on clothing. (Good thing too!) Each day we each have to decide to put on heartfelt compassion. That's God's way!

Conclusion: Five years ago the Christian group, Casting Crowns, released their sophomore album which they titled, “Lifesong.” The founder of the group Mark Hall, explained the song, said, “Worship is more than a song.” He echoed what we talked about today, that every day raises the question, “My way or God's way?”

If we could put your life to music, what would your lifesong tell us? Would your lifesong be about your wandering, a wasted life, a life spent, filled with apathy? Or would your life song be about abiding, focused with purpose, invested in eternal things, & filled with God's compassion?