

**Volume 22 Number 22 May 31, 2020**

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**Us and Them**

**The Bible is an unlimited source of material.** You can hardly read the same passage twice without finding some new meaning or seeing it in a different light. Even if it’s a story you’ve read many times before, there is still a refreshing appreciation for truth when you study it again. The Parable of the Prodigal in Luke 15 is no exception.

Jesus told three parables in this chapter to answer a complaint against Him from the scribes and Pharisees. The word *Pharisee* is from the Hebrew phrase "to separate," and the *scribes* were the experts and teachers of the Law of Moses. But they were grumbling this time saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them,” (15:2) The despised tax collectors and sinners of society were coming to Jesus for healing of the soul. His enemies thought that if He was really the Son of God, He would not associate with such people.

"So He told them this parable..." (15:3). The part of the verse that recently knocked me over is the word "them." Jesus’ three parables in this context had an intended audience: them. Who are the "them"? The Pharisees and the scribes.

Just because we are no longer living in the 1st Century does not mean that Pharisaism is dead. Why would Jesus spend so much time condemning the attitude and hypocrisy of the religious elite if there was no value or learning we could glean from it? We can become "them," meaning we can become more like the older brother than the prodigal son.

We become "them” **When we grumble while God rejoices.** When the younger son returned home and his father celebrated, the older brother became "angry" (15:28), a word that literally means "enraged." He couldn’t even call him his brother, only "this son of yours" (15:30). But his father rejoiced because that which was lost had been found. The lost were the ones Jesus came to seek and to save. While the Pharisees and scribes were complaining about sinners being forgiven, the angels were rejoicing in the presence of God.

Do you want God’s justice or mercy on others? We must start viewing the lost the way God sees them. He sees lost sheep who need a shepherd. He sees a lost coin that still has value and usefulness in His service. He sees a lost son whom He desperately wants back in the safety of His house. Inasmuch as we want God to receive us when we have sinned, so let us receive one another. And let us rejoice and not grumble when a sinner comes to repentance. Else, we become one of "them."

**When we compare ourselves with the wrong standard.** The older son looked pretty good next to his brother. "For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours...but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him"　(15:29-30). The problem with that line of reasoning is that God has never said He would compare one son to another. He uses a different standard.

What if we measured ourselves next to Jesus, the Son of God? Instead of looking around us and deciding that our spiritual condition is superior to the lowly "sinners," we ought to stand next to Jesus and see how far we fall short. "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23) and are in need of God’s grace. Through Him, we can be made into the image of His Son. When we lose sight of what we are without Him, we become like one of "them."

**When we expect to be rewarded for our righteousness.** "You have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends" (15:29). The older son felt that if the rankest sinner got the fattened calf, that which was reserved for a special occasion, where is the reward for the one who has been working at home the whole time? He was entitled to that; he deserved it, so he thought.

Do you really want God to deal with you based on what you deserve? "Son...all that is mine is yours" (15:31). Shouldn’t that be enough? He made you in His image. He crowned you with glory and honor. He provided for your salvation. He blessed you with more than you will ever need. What should be our attitude in return? "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done’" (Luke 17:10). Otherwise, we are like "them."

God is calling all of His children to come home. Those who have wandered away, He is ready to receive back safe and sound. Those who have been selfish, hypocritical, and unforgiving, He waits with open arms. "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1). I want to remain in that relationship with God.

 Bubba Garner

Angelic Appearances



**Health:**

 ***Myrna Campbell’s*** recent surgery was successful. She has family helping her and needs no extra help at present

 ***Misako Haws’*** eye surgery was successful; she is just awaiting full recovery

 ***Ron Haws*** has an appointment with a specialist tomorrow about the mass discovered during his recent colonoscopy

**Traveling:**

***Fluffy Hartz*** is in the Spokane area traveling with her visiting family. She’ll return Tuesday

**MOURNING:**

***Roy Sutherland’s*** mother, Elma, passed away last week. Additionally, Roy expects to undergo hernia surgery in two weeks. Here is Roy and his wife Kim's address:

**3633 7th Ave SW #20.**

**Olympia, WA 98502**.  Kim's email: *kimberlymcune1975@gmail.com.*

Cards or letters of encouragement would be appreciated and they could also use help to defray funeral costs.

**Online Gatherings:**

In addition to those services listed above in the “Service This Week” box:

 Sunday PM — 1:00 Hymn appreciation class

 Thursday PM — 7:00 Conversation Potluck

**Return To Services:**

The elders met on Saturday to discuss all that needs to be done prior to our being able to assemble together again. As those decisions and actions are firmed up, they will keep the congregation informed.

**Those Traveling**

**Fluffy Hartz**

**Away With The Military**

***Zacharee Brown***

The Barbers Rubin Carter The Haws

The Kryders       Charles Nance Rhonda Parnell

Ray Quick Kitty Reynard The Sands

Roy Sutherland Megan Vaughn\* Debbie Walker

**Remember These In Your Prayers**

**Deacon Duties Thru December**

Benevolence: *Paul, Ron & Jeff*

Service Roster: *Mike Mc. & Tim*

Children’s classes: *Ron*

Sun PM Anncmnts: *Henry & Mike C.*

Wed PM Anncmnts: *Ron*

**Services This Week**

**Zoom Worship:**

**Sunday 9:00 AM**

**Zoom Bible Classes**

**Sunday 5:00 PM**

**Wednesday 7:00 PM**

**SOUNDINGS FOR OUR MEMBERS**