

Two Lost Sons and a Seeking Father

Luke 15:11-32 ▪ April 21, 2026 ▪ Cal Robertson

The _____ lost son.

The _____ lost son.

The _____ seeking father.

Luke 15:11-32

¹¹ And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And 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. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’” (ESV)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: Have you ever expected a negative reaction from someone, but instead received kindness or grace? What made that moment memorable?

Read & Discuss: Luke 15:11-32

1. The younger son asks for his inheritance early (v. 12), essentially wishing his father were dead. What stands out to you about the father’s response? What does this reveal about the way God allows people to make real choices—even harmful ones?
2. The younger son eventually finds himself in desperation (vv. 14–16). Why do you think it sometimes takes reaching a low point for someone to “come to their senses” (v. 17)? In what ways might God use moments like these to get our attention or turn us back toward Him?
3. When the son returns, the father runs to him, embraces him, and celebrates (vv. 20–24). What do you find most surprising about the father’s reaction? How does this picture of the father challenge our instincts about worthiness and acceptance?
4. The older brother responds with anger and refuses to join the celebration (vv. 25–28). What might be at the root of his frustration? In what ways can outward obedience still be paired with an inward distance from the father? Where do you see this kind of attitude show up today?
5. The father goes out to the older brother and pleads with him (vv. 28–31). What does this reveal about his heart toward both sons? The older brother struggles with the father’s generosity, saying, “you never gave me...” (v. 29). Why is it so easy for long-term faithfulness to drift into entitlement, and how does that affect our ability to rejoice in grace shown to others?
6. This parable ends without telling us how the older brother responds. Why do you think Jesus leaves the story unresolved? What might He be inviting His listeners—and us—to consider about our own response to the Father’s invitation?

Apply: Which character do you find yourself relating to most right now—the younger son, the older brother, or somewhere in between? What step can you take this week to respond to the Father’s invitation?

Pray: Thank God for His compassion and readiness to welcome sinners home. Ask Him to reveal any areas where you have wandered or where your heart has grown distant. Pray for a deeper understanding of His grace and a growing ability to reflect His love toward others.