



Living and Sharing the Gospel

Weekly bulletin  
October 25, 2020

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week.. Please let Mr. Vautour know if you would like to be added to the weekly email list. See the bottom of the bulletin for the contact information

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

For more information about special activities happening in GCI international, please see the website at [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org). On the left-hand upper side of the screen, click on "PARTICIPATE". Click on it. A drop-down menu will appear. Click on "GCI UPDATE".

Please note that audio and video sermons are available at [www.worshiphim.ca](http://www.worshiphim.ca) and video sermons are now available on YouTube – GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL-MONCTON (see link below)

If most are able to attend, Zoom Meeting with the Moncton church this coming Thursday October 29 @ 7:30 p.m.

Prayer Meeting: Thursday November 4, 2020 at 7:30

If you have a prayer requests, other events you would like to announce and/or praise to our great God you would like to share, please try to contact Mr. Vautour by email, text or telephone no later than Saturday in the morning.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to [www.worshiphim.ca](http://www.worshiphim.ca) – under "Members Only" and type the password.

Let us pray for the Church "To live not to please man but to please God who tests our hearts", as he apostle Paul wrote in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Thessalonians.  
Let us pray according to God's will as per his instructions: "1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1Ti 2:1-4 ESV)  
Let us also pray for one another to follow and live by what Jesus told the apostles in John 13, "Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another".

**Offerings:** you can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5.** If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705.** Thank you for your continued generous giving to God by giving to this part of God's church, his body.

**For those living in Moncton area, if you wish, you can drop your offerings in our mailbox. I will mail them with the ministerial expenses at the end of each month.**

**From Mr. Bill Hall – GCI Canadian Director** "We will continue to process the donations we receive in Saskatoon. Members are urged to mail them directly to our office for the time-being. They can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using **the donate button** on our website [www.gcicanada.ca](http://www.gcicanada.ca) located at bottom of the page on the right side as you scroll down. We are waving the provision that all donations given via Canada Helps go toward national expenses for the time being. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend."

## The Measure of a Healthy Church



Mr. and Mrs Greg  
and Susan  
Williams

### Dear GCI Friends and Family,

A significant Christian author and church leader is how I describe Dr. Gene Getz, a long-time friend of GCI. A few years back Gene hosted me for his annual men's retreat and ski outing in Beaver Creek, CO. He is a kind, welcoming man with loads of spiritual depth.

Gene wrote a book in 1995 called *The Measure of a Healthy Church* (updated in 2001 and 2007). He recently sent me a signed copy and it has stimulated more thoughts and ideas about our shared quest toward Healthy Church.

Throughout the book, Gene shows how spiritual growth must be the focus above monitoring numerical growth. He also points out, however, that spiritual growth and numeric growth are not mutually exclusive – it is recorded in Acts chapter 2 that about 3,000 were added to the church after

Peter's compelling sermon about Jesus, the true Lord and Messiah.

Gene tells stories about several of the New Testament churches, and the one that intrigued me the most is the back story of Ephesus. Paul made this large Roman city of 300,000 people his base of operations for nearly three years. In [Acts 19:9-10](#) we see that Paul met with people on a daily basis in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for a stretch of two years.

### Can you imagine what that lecture series was like?

An important factor in the growth of the Ephesian church that often gets missed is this raising up of other leaders. In [Acts 19:6-7](#) Luke tells us that there were 12 men raised up and gifted in a similar way as the original apostles on the day of Pentecost. Recruiting, equipping and empowering other leaders matters.

The most encouraging and conforming section for me was chapter 4 – “A Divine Trilogy.” Gene demonstrates how faith, hope and love are a trilogy that jump off the pages of the New Testament and form a comprehensive perspective for evaluating corporate Christian life. He cites a quote from C.K. Barrett, a British Bible scholar who says, “Faith, hope and love are the central, essential and indefectible elements in Christianity.” Not only are these three qualities the true measure of the church, they are the best words in our English language to describe the person of Jesus. Jesus is faith, hope and love personified.

In GCI we encourage our members to manifest the spiritual virtues of faith, hope and love as Christ lives and shines in them. We have taken this a step further to design and structure our church ministries around this divine trilogy.

- The faith avenue is about discipleship. As individual believers, are we growing in our walk with Jesus? Are we growing deeper as a community of Christian believers?
- The hope avenue is about worship. Is Jesus being proclaimed in our church gatherings? Is corporate worship inspiring and are lives being transformed?
- The love avenue is about engaging in our church neighborhood and witnessing to the love of Christ. Are we out there daily as we see demonstrated by Paul in Ephesus? Are relationships being built and cultivated so that witnessing naturally happens?

So, what have we learned from this thumbnail sketch from Dr. Getz?

- Healthy churches preach Jesus and trust the Lord to add the numeric growth.
- Healthy churches multiply leaders for the work of the church.
- Healthy churches are centered around faith, hope and love (we can abbreviate this by saying healthy churches are centered in Jesus).

As President of GCI, my goal is to make the main things as plain as possible. I sincerely believe if we are attending to the basic principles outlined in this letter, we will see an abundance of spiritual and numeric growth in ways in which we have only dreamed.

A big thank you to my friend Dr. Gene Getz for his teaching and most of all for his loving support.

Growing Healthy Together! Greg Williams

---

### Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15), by Michael Morrison (From GCI.org)

The parable of the prodigal son ([Luke 15:11-32](#)) is perhaps better named the parable of the lost son, since it is designed to go with the parables of the lost sheep (**verses 3-7**) and lost coin (**verses 8-10**). Or it could be called the parable of two lost sons. Some have even called it the parable of the prodigal father, because of the father's extravagance. Even today, after centuries of teaching about God's grace, the father's willingness to forgive his runaway son is shockingly generous.

This is Jesus' longest parable: 22 verses. Let's go through the parable, noting its story, its organization and its lessons.

### Historical background and observations

#### 1. Return of the lost son — verses 11-24

##### A. The younger son leaves — verses 11-16

**"There was a man"** — This is a standard introduction to a parable. **"Who had two sons"** — The first parable in this chapter had one of 100 getting lost, the second parable one in 10, this parable has one out of two becoming lost. The sequence emphasizes the magnitude of the lost son. To lose half your sons would be a tragedy, and regaining half would likewise be a greater cause for rejoicing.

**"The younger son"** — There's no mention of a wife, so he would probably have been 18-20. His youth isn't emphasized, but younger sons may be more likely to be foolish and older sons more likely to look down on a brother. Figuratively, the older son represented the Pharisees and the younger son represented the people Jesus was reaching (**verse 1**). In the early church, the older son may have been seen as corresponding to the Jews and the younger son to Gentiles.

**"Give me my share of the estate"** — Inheritances were normally given only when the father died. The son's demand for an early distribution was unusual and frowned upon — it's as if the son had said, **"I wish you were dead."** He valued the money more than he did the relationship. Traditionally, firstborn sons were given twice as much as other sons, but we don't know if this was always done in Jesus' day. If so, the younger son would have received one third of the estate. The amount isn't stressed. Nor are we told how the property was turned into cash. Such details are ignored because they aren't part of the point.

**"Divided his property"** — Early distribution of the estate normally meant that the father continued to receive the benefits of the estate as long as he lived. (The father could therefore kill the fattened calf without asking the older son, who owned it.) The younger son didn't just receive surplus property; it was part of the father's source of income. (The word for property is *bios*, meaning **"the resources which one has as a means of living."**<sup>[1]</sup>) If a son sold land, the new owner could not use it until the father died. Again, such details are ignored because they are not part of the point. **"Between them"** — The older son also received his share.

**"Not long after that"** — His departure was probably not surprising. His desire for the inheritance indicated he wanted to strike out on his own rather than continue being part of the family. He was insulting the family as well as injuring it. **"A distant country"** — A Gentile country. Many Jews lived in Gentile areas. **"Squandered his wealth in wild living"** — Not only did he waste the money, he sinned in the process. However, his sins aren't specified. Luke doesn't emphasize the sinning as much as he does losing the money. This is consistent with Luke's interest in possessions and poverty. Perhaps the prodigal son was trying to make friends by spending money on them.

**"Spent everything...began to be in need"** — His poverty is emphasized, not any deficiency in character. Luke is emphasizing his lostness, not his guilt. **"To feed pigs"** — He had an unclean occupation, abandoning religious scruples, but still the emphasis seems to be on his poverty (hunger, verse 16) rather than sin.

**"He longed to fill his stomach with the pods"** — He *wished* he could eat the carob-tree pods, but humans can't digest them. As a servant, he would have received some pay. Jesus is painting a hypothetical, not an actual story, to emphasize the son's desperate plight. **"No one gave him anything"** — He received no alms (one of Luke's interests). His former friends did not help him.

##### B. The son decides to return — verses 17-20

**"When he came to his senses"** — This pivotal verse changes the direction of the story. **"When"** (rather than "it so happened that") implies that his sanity was inevitable. The word "repentance" is not used. **"My father's hired servants"** — He contrasts himself, a hired servant of a Gentile, to his father's servants, who had plenty to eat. **"Food to spare...starving to death"** — Though the setting of the story is sin and repentance (verses 1-2), the story itself emphasizes financial need rather than moral corruption. **"Starving"** is another exaggeration. If he had been near starvation, he would not have had the strength to travel back home.

**"Set out and go"** — Literally, **"rising up, I will go."** This was a translation of an Aramaic idiom for go immediately. But "arise" may also hint at a rising in state of life.

He then prepared a speech he would use to get a job with his father. **"Sinned against heaven"** — "Heaven" is a euphemism for God — used perhaps because the father represents God in the story. Specific sins aren't mentioned except in the accusations of the older brother (verse 30). **"And against you"** — He acknowledged his affront to the family. "No longer worthy to be called your son" — This could be in a legal and a moral sense: He had no rights for further inheritance, and his behavior had not been up to family standards. He assumed that his relationship to his father was

based on the work that he did – he had to be worthy. **“Make me like one of your hired servants”** — He was willing to earn his keep by serving the family (which would have meant serving his older brother, too).[2]

### C. The father receives him — verses 20-24

**“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him”** — Some commentators say this implies that the father was continually watching for the return of his son. However, the text says nothing about watching, nor does it add a word like “when” to imply inevitability. It says: **“The son being yet far off, his father saw him.”** The father was very willing to have a reconciliation — acting while the son was far away shows that, without any need to add the idea of watching.

**“Compassion...ran”** — These words emphasize the father’s enthusiasm. In ancient societies, it was considered undignified for an older man to pull up his robes to run. His actions, representative of God’s feelings for repentant sinners, show enthusiastic acceptance, love and joy. **“Kiss”** — Perhaps a sign of forgiveness (cf. [2 Samuel 14:33](#)). The son didn’t finish his speech, perhaps because he was cut short by his father.

**“Best robe...ring”** — Both robe and ring may allude to Joseph’s promotion to authority ([Genesis 41:42](#)). Robes were given to honored guests; the ring was a signet ring, indicating authority. **“Sandals”** — Servants did not wear sandals; only family members did.

**“Fattened calf”** — Meat was eaten primarily on festivals, and calves would be fattened for such feasts, so this may hint that a celebration of restoration is more important than a religious festival. The celebration corresponds to the “rejoice” of the parables of the lost sheep and coin.

**“This son of mine was dead”** — In what way was he dead? Here are two possibilities: 1) The father heard about the famine, hadn’t heard from his son in a long time, and thought he had died. 2) Perhaps he counted him metaphorically dead because he had become as a Gentile. Some Jews conducted funerals for children who married Gentiles. But the father doesn’t seem to be the type to disown his son.

## 2. Conflict with the older son

### A. The older son comes home — verses 25-27

So far, this parable has been parallel to the first two parables in Luke 15; the lost has been found and there is rejoicing. The parable could have stopped at this point, and still be a good parable. However, Jesus uses the older son to introduce an additional lesson in the parable. Perhaps this is where our attention should be directed, because it is what is new and different.

In some ways this is two parables in one, both parts ending with the statement about dead and alive, lost and found. Both sons are lost — one who left home (like the sheep that was lost in verse 4) and one who was lost even while at home (like the coin in verse 8). Both the “sinners” and the Pharisees were separated from God — the first ones are visibly lost, the others still live at home — but both are welcomed when they turn to God.

The older son’s arrival on the scene is odd; normally a servant would have been sent to get him at the start. But in the parable it is as if the older son found out about the party by accident. Some commentators say this implies the son was out of touch with his father, estranged in attitude or too addicted to work. This seems to read too much into the story; he may have simply been working at the far end of the estate.

The older son is contrasted to the younger: The younger starts the story by leaving home; the older starts by returning. The younger then decides to go home; the older refuses to enter. The younger wants to be his father’s servant; the older son resents being a servant. The younger son admits guilt; the older one insists on his innocence. The servant describes the younger son as **“safe and sound,”** or in health; this is less dramatic than the father’s comment about dead and alive. The servant is matter-of-fact; the father is overjoyed.

### B. Complaint of the older son — verses 28-30

The older son **“became angry”** — in contrast to his father’s compassion — and he did not want to go in despite knowing his father’s will. In contrast to the older son’s unwillingness to come in, the father went out, just as he had done for the younger son. **“Pleaded with him”** — The father eagerly desired for the older son to share his joy. Normally a son would do what his father said to do; here the older son is disobedient. The older son had inherited his father’s estate, but not his attitude of mercy.

**“Look!”** — The older son starts abruptly, hinting of disrespect, frustration and impatience. **“I’ve been slaving for you”** — The verb is *douleuo*, related to *doulos*, servant. His relationship to his father was based on work, not love. **“Never disobeyed”** — until now.

**“You never gave me even a young goat”** — Yet a goat is of lesser value than a calf. But the father would have given a goat if the son had asked (**verse 31**). The son felt unappreciated and unrewarded; his complaint suggests that he had a long-smoldering resentment. He complained about the extra given to the younger — similar to the workers in the vineyard who complained about a days’ wage being given to those who worked only one hour ([Matthew 20:12](#)).

**“This son of yours”** — The older brother doesn’t say “my brother”; it is as if he no longer claims him. **“Squandered”** — Literally, “devoured,” an ironic word for a man who was starving. **“Your property”** — This continues the emphasis on physical possessions. The younger son had wasted part of the family estate, failing in his duty to provide for his father. **“With prostitutes”** — Did the older son really know how his brother had spent the money? Perhaps the financial waste had begun before the son left home, or perhaps some reports had come back from the far country. Both are possible, but the story says nothing about it. This suggests that the older son (perhaps like the Pharisees) was making an unsubstantiated accusation.

### C. Response of the father — verses 31-32

**“My son”** — The usual word for “son” in this parable is *huios*; here it is *teknon*, “child,” a term of affection. **“Everything I have is yours”** — The older son will get the entire inheritance. Some commentators speculate about the legal status of the property rights and whether the younger son could have inherited something, but the parable says nothing about it. Inheritance details are not the point; acceptance or reconciliation is. Older sons inherited twice as much as other sons because they had a responsibility to the family. The older son would have had a duty to take care of a brother who fell on hard times. But the older son was not willing to accept this responsibility; he (like the younger son!) simply wanted the property.

**“We had to celebrate”** — The word *edei* is used, meaning “it was necessary.” Rejoicing about the return of a lost person isn’t an option — it is a necessity. **“This brother of yours”** — Not “my son,” but **“your brother.”** The father reminded the older son of his family responsibility. The implication is that it is necessary for *him* to rejoice — and by extension, for the Pharisees to rejoice at what Jesus was doing.

### What this parable teaches us about God

The context helps us understand the lessons of the parable. Verses 1-2 tell us that sinners and tax collectors were being taught by Jesus. Pharisees criticized Jesus — not for teaching such people, but for eating with them, which was a sign of social acceptance. The Pharisees tried hard to be righteous, and they were disturbed that Jesus accepted people who hadn’t been trying hard. Perhaps they were worried that Jesus was making it too easy on people, and his acceptance might encourage others to be lazy.

Jesus then gave the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, both concluding that God rejoices about each sinner who repents. **“There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (verse 7).** There’s no such thing as a person who has no need for repentance, but the Pharisees weren’t yet aware of that. There would be rejoicing for them, too, if they would accept it.

The parable of the lost son continues the theme of rejoicing and adds to it. The first half of the parable illustrates rejoicing over a sinner who returned; the second half more directly addresses the situation Jesus faced: criticism about his willingness to be with sinners. By telling the parable the way he did, Jesus chides those who do not rejoice about the sinners’ interest in being taught (figuratively, they were returning to God).

In the first two parables, the lost were found by searching. But the younger son was found by waiting. The spiritually lost were already coming to Jesus. They had been spiritually dead and were now showing interest — they wanted to be taught by Jesus. Jesus received them and ate with them. His reception would have encouraged them to obey as much as they knew and to continue to listen to him for more instruction in God’s way.

But the parable is not just about Jesus in the first century; it is also a timeless message about God the Father. He rejoices over (cf. the celebration) and honors (cf. the robe, ring and sandals) every sinner who repents. He doesn’t wait for a full and formal apology; he perceives the attitude and comes toward us.<sup>[3]</sup> This theme of joyful acceptance, similar to that of the first two parables of this chapter, dominates the first part of this parable. This lesson is illustrated by the father:

### He is always ready to welcome a returning child.

The parable shows that sinners can confess and return to God. Since God is gracious, sinners can return to him with confidence that he will warmly welcome them. But in the parable, poverty is more prominent than sin. Unlike the first two parables, the word *repent* is not used; only superficial reasons are given for the son’s return. As Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, encouraging sinners to return was not the main issue; the main issue was what to do about sinners who were already willing to return.

The parable shows that God’s people should rejoice at a) the willingness of sinners to turn to God and b) the willingness of God to receive them. This is the lesson of the second half of the parable, illustrated by the father’s correction of his older son. This theme addresses the setting of the three parables, the Pharisees’ criticism of Jesus’ reception of sinners. The parables of the lost sheep and lost coin and the first half of the parable of the lost son are preparatory to this point.

These themes are timeless. God rejoices over each person who repents, and so should we. We need not kill a calf for repentant persons (Jesus didn't; the parable illustrates the attitude of rejoicing, not the specific actions we should take). We need to accept repentant<sup>[4]</sup> sinners to social fellowship (cf. eating with them, verse 2) and religious instruction (cf. allowing them to listen, verse 1). This parable does not say we should *seek* outcasts (that is shown better by the parables of lost sheep and lost coin), but that we should be happy when they come to us to be taught. Jesus' story shows that it is ungodly to refuse to rejoice about repentance. The Pharisees, by insisting on a too-strict standard of righteousness, were being unrighteous. They, too, needed to repent.

#### Epilogue

The parable ends without revealing what the older son did. Would the hard-hearted son change his mind and rejoice about his brother's return? For the situation in Jesus' day, either response was still possible — it was up to the Pharisees. Would they rejoice with Jesus? The book of Acts shows that some did and some did not.

Similarly, the parable does not reveal what the younger son did. Did he abuse his second chance? That also reflects the situation Jesus was in. Would the tax collectors and sinners continue in their repentance? It was not yet known. Nevertheless, it is appropriate — no, necessary — to rejoice at their first change of heart, rather than waiting for some probationary period.

[1] J. Louw and E. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, volume 1, page 560, 57.18.

[2] "Hired men" is *misthioi*, contract laborers, probably farmhands, not the *douloi*, household bondservants, mentioned in verse 22.

[3] Theologically, people do not start coming toward God unless they are led by the Holy Spirit. The Father has been seeking (illustrated by the first two parables in this chapter) before the people "come to themselves" and desire to return.

[4] This does not mean that people must conform to all our expectations before we will have anything to do with them (that was the attitude of the Pharisees). In the context, their repentance is shown not by perfect behavior, but simply by their willingness to be with and to be taught by Jesus. They were turned in the right direction, even though they were not very far along on the journey.

**GCI principle website and Moncton Websites**—a) [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org) , b) [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) , c) <https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton> ; d) *Grace Communion International-Moncton* <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKazyWhmKmDZy69vJcFfPg>  
For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the *GCI.org* website.  
Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email— [evautour47@outlook.com](mailto:evautour47@outlook.com)