

THE FEAST OF FORGIVENESS

Text: Luke 15:1-32

Introduction:

1. The feasts commanded by God were physical observances that had mental and emotional benefits.
2. Of course, they also taught important spiritual lessons.
3. Under the New Testament, the only feast commanded by God is the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper.
4. However, the concept of feasting and the principles learned from the Old Testament feasts are used frequently in the Gospel.
5. One example comes from the parables of Jesus and describes the feast of mercy (Luke 14).
6. Closely associated is an example from another parable of Jesus – the feast of forgiveness...

I. The Context of the Feast (Luke 15:1-10)

- A. The background of the parables is the fact that Jesus received and dined with tax-collectors and sinners (cf. 5:29-30; 7:36-39; 19:1-10).
- B. Thus, Jesus taught three parables about compassion for the lost.
- C. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (vs. 3-7)
 1. The appeal was to the men.
 2. The actions of the shepherd were noble, but foolish.
 3. The rejoicing was genuine and extravagant.
- D. The Parable of the Lost Coin (vs. 8-10)
 1. The appeal was to the women.
 2. The actions were understandable because the loss was greater.
 3. The rejoicing was genuine and extravagant.
- E. The Parable of the Lost Sons (vs. 11-32)
 1. It is not the parable of the Prodigal Son.
 2. It is not a parable about only one lost son.
 3. Certainly, the loss of two sons is greater than that of a sheep or coin (cf. Ezekiel 34:4, 6, 11-16)!

II. The Conflict of the Feast (Luke 15:11-19, 25-30)

- A. The family setting is intentional and important; Christians are sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.
- B. The sins of the younger son show one side of the conflict:
 1. He disrespected his father by his selfishness and rebellion.
 2. He disregarded his brother by his greed and egotism.
 3. He disgraced his family by his worldly and wasteful choices.
 4. He dishonored himself by his depravity.

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- C. Thankfully, he saw the error of his way, repented, and returned to his father and his family.
 - D. The sins of the older son show the other side of the conflict:
 - 1. He disrespected his father by his self-righteousness.
 - 2. He disregarded his brother by his unwillingness to forgive.
 - 3. He disgraced his family by his isolation.
 - 4. He dishonored himself by his anger and arrogance.
 - E. Sadly, he refused to see his sins and remained separated from his father and his family.
- III. The Celebration of the Feast (Luke 15:20-24, 31-32)
- A. The response of the father to the younger son's return was not typical nor expected.
 - 1. The attitude of the older son was representative of how the majority of the Israelites (and people in general) react to the return of the wayward.
 - 2. Most fathers would have responded much differently (cf. 1 Samuel 20:30).
 - B. In fact, the Law of Moses prescribed a serious punishment for this kind of rebellion (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).
 - C. The father's forgiveness was genuine and extravagant!
 - D. He declared a holiday and called for a feast of abundant celebration.
 - E. Yet, his response to the elder son was no less unexpected.
 - 1. The father sought out the stubborn, self-righteous son.
 - 2. The father intreated, invited, and implored him to join the feast.
 - F. He lovingly explained his relationship as a father to his sons – different in situation but equal in love.
 - G. It is fitting to celebrate the overwhelming grace and extravagant forgiveness of God toward sinners!
 - 1. The options were not great.
 - 2. The Law demanded death.
 - 3. The son requested servitude.
 - 4. But the father chose forgiveness, honor, and feasting!
 - H. One who has received the Father's salvation must learn to accept the honor of sonship and to dine at the feast of forgiveness.
 - I. One who has received the Father's forgiveness must never come to trust in his own works or goodness.
 - J. One who has not received such a gift must come to the Father in humble, penitent obedience.