

The Parable Jesus Didn't Finish

Children's Keyword: Joy

WOULD YOU BUY A PUZZLE IF ONE PIECE WAS MISSING?

WOULD YOU READ A BOOK IF THE LAST CHAPTER WAS TORN OUT?

WOULD YOU WATCH A MOVIE IF THE LAST FIVE MINUTES HAD BEEN ERASED?

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO A STORY IF SOMEONE LEFT THE ENDING OFF?

YET, THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT JESUS DOES IN THE PARABLE OF THE ELDER BROTHER. WE FIND HIS STORY IN LUKE 15:25-32.

READ

IN LUKE 15, WE FIND A TRILOGY OF PARABLES ABOUT THE LOST BEING FOUND. THE LOST SHEEP, THE LOST COIN AND THE LOST SON. THE STORY OF THE ELDER BROTHER IS PART OF A DOUBLE PARABLE. IN THE FIRST HALF, WE READ OF THE PRODIGAL—YOUNGER BROTHER. THE STORY IS TOLD BY JESUS IN A LITERARY FORM KNOWN AS A BALLAD. THE STORY USES PARALLELS AS FOLLOWS.

** SLIDE

THE FIRST SIX STANZAS:

SPEECH I

HE LEAVES

IN NEED BUT UNREPENTANT

BECOMES A PIG HERDER

EATS NOTHING

IS DYING

THE SECOND SIX STANZAS:

SPEECH II

HE RETURNS

IN NEED BUT TRULY

REPENTANT

BECOMES AN HONORED SON

EATS THE FATTED CALF

IS ALIVE

THE ELDER BROTHER'S STORY USES THE SAME LITERARY
FORMAT, BUT SOMETHING IS STRANGELY MISSING:

** SLIDE

1. **HE COMES TOWARD THE HOUSE**

2. **YOUR BROTHER HAS RETURNED– THERE IS A FEAST.**

3. **THE FATHER COMES TO RECONCILE**

4. **COMPLAINT (HOW YOU TREAT ME)**

4. **COMPLAINT (HOW YOU TREAT HIM)**

3. **THE FATHER TRIES TO RECONCILE**

2. **YOUR BROTHER IS SAFE– THERE IS A FEAST.**

1. ***** MISSING*****

IT IS AS IF JESUS DROPS THE CLOSING CURTAIN BEFORE THE FINAL LINE. WE ARE LEFT HANGING. THERE IS A PIECE OF THIS STORY MISSING.

HOWEVER, THIS PIECE IS NOT MISSING FORM THE PREVIOUS THREE PARABLES:

** LOST SHEEP

** LOST COIN

** LOST SON

WHAT IS MISSING IN THE PARABLE OF THE ELDER BROTHER?

** SLIDE (3 WORDS WILL COME IN ON CLICK)

JOY, CELEBRATION, REJOICING.

LET'S RE-WRITE THE FINAL PHRASE TO MATCH THE OTHER PARABLES:

** (SLIDE)

“AND HE CAME AND ENTERED THE HOUSE
AND JOINED IN THE CELEBRATION
SO THE TWO SONS WERE RECONCILED TO THEIR FATHER.”

WOW! WOULDN'T THAT BE A FANTASTIC ENDING? JOY,
CELEBRATION, REJOICING.

BUT... THAT ISN'T HOW THE STORY ENDED. WHY NO JOY, WHY NO CELEBRATION, WHY NO REJOICING?

TODAY, WE WILL DISCOVER 3 BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES IN THE LIFE OF THE OLDER BROTHER THAT WERE JOY-STEALERS.

** (JOY STEALERS)

AS WE EXAMINE OUR OWN LIVES—I'D ASK YOU TO REFLECT WHETHER ANY OF THESE BEHAVIORS OR ATTITUDE ARE PRESENT IN YOUR LIFE AS THEY HAVE BEEN IN MINE.

THERE IS A SONG THAT PUT IT WELL... "SOMETIMES I'M A PRODIGAL...SOMETIMES I'M THE OTHER BROTHER."

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THIS OLDER BROTHER THAT ROBBED HIS LIFE OF JOY?

WE ARE FIRST INTRODUCED TO HIM IN LUKE 15:11, "A CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS. THE YOUNGER SON MAKES AN UNHEARD OF REQUEST OF HIS FATHER.

BY MAKING THIS REQUEST, THE YOUNGER SON IS TREATING HIS FATHER AS IF HE IS ALREADY DEAD.

THE INHERITANCE WAS ONLY BESTOWED UPON THE DEATH OF THE FATHER...SUCH DISRESPECT TO ASK FOR IT AHEAD OF TIME WOULD HAVE BEEN MET WITH STERN REBUKE AND DISCIPLINE.

THE IMPLICATION OF THE SON WAS, "FATHER, I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL YOU DIE!" ONE HISTORIAN NOTES, "THERE IS NO LAW OR CUSTOM AMONG THE JEWS OR ARABS WHICH ENTITLES THE SON TO A SHARE OF THE FATHER'S WEALTH WHILE THE FATHER IS STILL ALIVE."

WHERE IS THE ELDER SON IN ALL OF THIS? HE IS STANDING RIGHT THERE...VERSE 12... "SO THE FATHER DIVIDED TO THEM HIS LIVELIHOOD."

THE ACTION OF THE ELDER SON IS EQUALLY A BETRAYAL TOWARD THE FATHER. A LOYAL SON WOULD HAVE LOUDLY REJECTED THE OFFER OF HIS FATHER'S PROPERTY.

BUT THE ELDER SON'S GUILT IN THIS TRANSACTION LAY DEEPER THAN THAT. IT WAS HIS DUTY AS THE OLDEST SON TO TRY AND RECONCILE THE SITUATION.

THIS WAS AN EXPECTED ROLE AS HE WAS A THIRD PARTY AND IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH SIDE. "THE ROLE OF RECONCILER IS THRUST UPON THE OLDER SON BY ALL THE PRESSURES OF CUSTOM AND COMMUNITY. HIS SILENCE MEANS REFUSAL."

THIS IS THE FIRST JOY-STEALER.

** (SLIDE)

SILENCE...

FAILURE TO ACT ON THE SIDE OF RIGHT. FAILURE TO TAKE A STAND...THE DRAW A LINE IN THE SAND.

I HAVE FOUND THAT REMAINING SILENT...NOT TAKING A STAND DOES STEAL A PERSONS JOY.

IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL...SNOW FIGHT, WASH FACE IN SNOW...FUN!

PLEASE STOP...CRY...RUNNING. LAUGH, CHASING...

IT WASN'T FUN ANYMORE.

CONTRAST THAT TO AN EXPERIENCE IN HIGH SCHOOL.

FRESHMEN...PUSH A DIME ACROSS THE FLOOR WITH HIS NOSE.

DALE- STOP. ALMOST SPIT IN MY FACE. I COULD HAVE SILENTLY WATCHED AND LAUGHED.

INSIDE...COMPROMISED...JOY WOULD BE STOLEN AWAY.

IN OUR ADULT LIVES...OUR SILENCE TAKES ON MORE COMPLEXITY.

EVERY TIME...SILENCE WILL STEAL OUR JOY.

- NOT ACCURATELY REPORTING INCOME TO THE IRS
- NOT TELLING OUR EMPLOYER THAT WE KEEP THE SABBATH.
- NOT PAYING TITHE.
- NOT SWITCHING THE CHANNEL WHEN AN INAPPROPRIATE SHOW FLASHES ON THE SCREEN.
- SILENTLY STANDING BY...EVEN LAUGHING ALONG...AS SOMEONE IS MADE THE BUTT OF JOKES AT WORK.

THE OPPORTUNITIES TO REMAIN SILENT ARE ALWAYS THERE. IT TAKES GUTS TO STAND FOR THE RIGHT...TO SPEAK UP...TO TAKE A STAND.

** (SLIDE)

NOTICE WHAT THIS FAMOUS QUOTE FROM ELLEN WHITE SAYS,

THE GREATEST WANT OF THE WORLD IS THE WANT OF MEN,--MEN WHO WILL NOT BE BOUGHT OR SOLD; MEN WHO IN THEIR INMOST SOULS ARE TRUE AND HONEST; MEN WHO DO NOT FEAR TO CALL SIN BY ITS RIGHT NAME; MEN WHOSE CONSCIENCE IS AS TRUE TO DUTY AS THE NEEDLE TO THE POLE; MEN WHO WILL STAND FOR THE RIGHT THOUGH THE HEAVENS FALL.-- *EDUCATION*, P. 57.

THE FIRST JOY-STEALER IS COMPROMISED SILENCE.

THE SECOND JOY-STEALER WE FIND IN VERSES 25-26,
“NOW THE ELDER SON WAS IN THE FIELDS AND AS HE CAME
AND DREW NEAR TO THE HOUSE HE HEARD MUSIC AND
DANCING AND HE CALLED ONE OF THE BOYS AND ASKED HIM
WHAT THIS MEANT...”

THE PARTY WAS TIMED TO BEGIN AS MEN CAME IN FROM
WORKING IN THE FIELDS. THE MUSIC SIGNALLED TO THE
COMMUNITY THAT THE FEAST WAS READY TO BEGIN.

CUSTOM WAS FOR THE FEAST TO BE ATTENDED ONLY BY
ADULTS. THE ELDEST SONS ROLE WOULD BE TO GREET THE
GUEST AND SEE THAT THEY WERE COMFORTABLE AND CARED
FOR.

NORMALLY, THE ELDEST SON WOULD ENTER QUICKLY INTO
THE HOUSE...ANXIOUS TO JOIN THE CELEBRATION AND
ASSUME HIS RESPONSIBILITIES. HOWEVER, HE APPROACHES
THE HOUSE WITH SUSPICION.

IT WAS COMMON FOR YOUNG BOYS TO CONGREGATE AROUND
THE ENTRANCE...KICKING UP DUST AND PLAYING
GAMES...THE IS THE FIRST GROUP THE ELDER BROTHER COMES
TO. HE CALLS ONE OF THEM ASIDE TO FIND OUT WHAT IS
GOING ON.

** SLIDE (2ND)

THE SECOND JOY-STEALER IS SUSPICION.

SUSPICION IS LINKED WITH A CRITICAL ATTITUDE. THIS TYPE OF PERSON WILL STAND ON THE OUTSIDE AND CAST STONES. THEY WILL DUMP BUCKETS OF COLD WATER ON ANY AND ALL IDEAS.

THEY WILL STAND BY AND CRITICIZE THOSE WHO ARE WORKING FOR GOD...WHILE DOING NOTHING THEMSELVES. I HAVE SEEN SUSPICIOUS AND CRITICAL PEOPLE HOLD CHURCHES HOSTAGE.

I WANT TO QUICKLY HASTEN TO SAY THAT SUSPICION IS DIFFERENT THAN CAUTION. CAUTION SEES POTENTIAL DANGER AND TRIES TO AVERT IT. CAUTIOUS PEOPLE CAN BE A GREAT ASSET TO THE CHURCH AT TIMES. THEY CAN HELP US IMPROVE AND STRENGTHEN OUR PLANS AS A CHURCH.

A SUSPICIOUS OR CRITICAL PERSON, HOWEVER, HAS A SINISTER SIDE. THEY JUST WAITING FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO MESS UP SO THEY HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK BETTER.

WE AS A CHURCH SHOULD BE OPEN TO NEW IDEAS, TO DIFFERENT WAYS OF DOING THINGS, TO CREATIVE APPROACHES. THIS SHOULD BE DONE ENTHUSIASTICALLY...WITH CAUTION AT TIMES...BUT NOT WITH SINISTER SUSPICION.

THE THIRD JOY-STEALER IS FOUND IN VERSES 28-29. READ

THE REFUSAL OF THE ELDER SON TO COME IN AND CELEBRATE WOULD CAUSE PUBLIC HUMILIATION TO THE FATHER. CUSTOM REQUIRED HIS PRESENCE.

REMEMBER THE STORY OF QUEEN VASHTI REFUSING TO COME BEFORE THE KING WHEN SUMMONED. THE RESULT WAS LOSS OF HER THRONE. THE LISTENER TO JESUS PARABLE WOULD HAVE EXPECTED THE FATHER TO FEEL A SIMILAR BURNING OF ANGER THAT KING AHASUERUS HAD TOWARD VASHTI.

INSTEAD, FOR THE SECOND TIME THAT DAY...THE FATHER GOES DOWN OUT OF THE HOUSE OFFERING A PUBLIC HUMILIATION AND A DEMONSTRATION OF UNEXPECTED LOVE.

HE GOES TO ENTREAT HIM...NOT TO SCOLD OR REBUKE.

THE ELDER SON DOESN'T EVEN ADDRESS HIS FATHER BY TITLE... "LO, THESE MANY YEARS I HAVE BEEN SERVING YOU...THE GREEK ACTUALLY IS STATED MORE CLEARLY, I HAVE SLAVED FOR YOU... I NEVER TRANSGRESSED YOUR COMMANDMENT AT ANY TIME AND YOU NEVER GAVE ME A YOUNG GOAT, THAT I MIGHT MAKE MERRY WITH MY FRIENDS. BUT AS SOON AS THIS SON OF YOURS CAME, WHO HAS DEVoured YOUR LIVELIHOOD WITH HARLOTS, YOU KILLED THE FATTED CALF"

IN THIS STATEMENT, THE ELDER SON PRONOUNCES THE THIRD JOY-STEALER...SUPERIORITY.

I HAVE WORKED HARD, I HAVE OBEYED YOU...I'M BETTER THAN THAT PIECE OF TRASH IN THERE THAT YOU ARE THROWING A PARTY FOR. COME ON, WHERE'S MY PARTY.

** (SLIDE)

THE LOGIC OF THE ELDER SON AT THIS POINT IS ALMOST BELIEVABLE...BUT IT ISN'T TRUE. HE HADN'T "SLAVED"...SIMPLY BECAUSE HE WASN'T A SLAVE--- HE WAS A SON. THE PROPERTY, LIVESTOCK, EVEN THE SLAVES WERE ALL HIS.

SECOND, HE HADN'T OBEYED ALL HIS FATHER'S COMMANDS. THE REFUSAL TO ENTER INTO THE FIRST WAS JUST THE MOST RECENT BREAK OF FAITH WITH HIS FATHER.

ANYTIME WE BEGIN TO COMPARE OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS WITH SOMEONE ELSE, JOY IS SQUELCHED FROM OUR LIVES. SATAN THRIVES ON THE COMPARISON GAME.

AS LONG AS WE THINK THAT WE ARE DOING BETTER THAN SOMEONE ELSE...OUR FOCUS IS OFF OF JESUS AND ONTO OURSELVES AND OUR PERFORMANCE.

THE COMPARISON GAME WAS PLAYED WELL BY THE PHARISEES, LUKE 18:11,12, "GOD I THANK YOU THAT I AM NOT LIKE OTHER MEN—(NOTICE THE COMPARISON TO OTHERS), EXTORTIONERS, UNJUST, ADULTERERS, OR EVEN AS THIS TAX COLLECTOR (EVEN COMPARING TO A SPECIFIC PERSON). I FAST TWICE A WEEK; I GIVE TITHES OF ALL THAT I POSSESS."

IN CONTRAST, THE TAX COLLECTOR WOULDN'T EVEN LOOK UP TO HEAVEN. HE BEAT HIS CHEST AND SAID, "GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER!"

THE NEWS I HAVE FOR YOU THIS MORNING IS THAT THE GROUND AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS IS LEVEL. THE ELDER BROTHER HAD NO ADVANTAGE OVER THE PRODIGAL SON.

IN FACT, AT THE END OF THE DAY...IT IS THE PRODIGAL THAT IS SAVED AND THE OLDER BROTHER THAT IS LOST.

ALL SIN SEPARATES FROM GOD. THE PRIDE OF THINKING OF OURSELVES AS SUPERIOR IN SOME WAY CAN BE THE SIN THAT CATCHES US.

THE RESULT OF THE COMPARISON GAME IS FOR OUR JOY TO STOLEN AWAY.

I REMEMBER JIM AND PATRICIA. THEY TOLD ME THAT THEY WERE GOING TO SEARCH THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES FOR THE PERFECT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH. YOU SEE THEY SAW THEMSELVES AS SUPERIOR...NO CHEESE, NO SUGAR, NO IN-BETWEEN MEALS...A LOT OF NO'S AND MIGHT I ADD...NO JOY!

THEIR SEARCH FAILED WITH PATRICIA CHEATING ON HER HUSBAND WITH HER BOSS AND LEAVING BOTH JIM AND THE ADVENTIST CHURCH. I'VE FOUND THAT PEOPLE WHO SPEND A LOT OF TIME TALKING ABOUT DON'TS TYPICALLY DON'T HAVE JOY IN THEIR LIVES.

THEY ARE MISERABLY TRYING TO WORK THEIR WAY TO GOD BY MAKING THEMSELVES APPEAR MORE HOLY AND PURE THAN OTHERS.

WE'VE LOOKED AT THREE JOY-STEALERS FOUND IN THE LIFE OF THE ELDER BROTHER.
SILENCE, SUSPICION & SUPERIORITY.

JOY IS DRAMATICALLY MISSING IN THIS PARABLE. IN THE PARABLES OF THE SHEEP, COIN AND PRODIGAL JOY IS ACCENTUATED NEAR THE CENTER OF THE STORY AND AT THE END OF EACH.

THE STORY OF THE ELDER BROTHER ONLY SPEAKS OF PLEADING FOR THE JOY THAT WAS ABSENT.

THE YOUNGER SON WAS DEAD AND IS ALIVE. THE OLDER SON IS LIKEWISE DEAD. CAN HE COME TO LIFE?

THE FATHER GOES OUT AND FINDS BOTH SONS. ONE UNDERSTANDS AND ACCEPTS THE STATUS OF BEING FOUND.

THE OTHER, SO FAR AS WE KNOW, DOES NOT, AND REMAINS LOST.

JESUS DRAMATICALLY ENDS THE PARABLE WITH THE OLDER SON STILL OUTSIDE. LUKE 15 BEGINS WITH A COMPLAINT ABOUT JESUS EATING WITH TAX COLLECTORS AND SINNERS. JESUS MAKES THE INVITATION TO JOIN THE FEAST.

TRUE JOY CAN ONLY BE EXPERIENCED IN BEING FOUND AND
BECOMING PART OF THE CELEBRATION.

THE PARABLE HAS NO END...THE END IS FOR YOU TO WRITE.

** (SLIDE—JOIN THE FEAST)