

The 4 Rs in the Gospel: Rebellion, Realization, Repentance, and Restoration
(subtitle: From false party to true party)

Luke 15:11-24 (NASB)

The Prodigal Son

¹¹ And He said, "A man had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. ¹³ And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with **loose living**. ¹⁴ Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be **impoverished**. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and **no one was giving anything to him**. ¹⁷ But when **he came to his senses**, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! ¹⁸ **I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."** ²⁰ So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best **robe** and put it on him, and put a **ring** on his hand and **sandals** on his feet; ²³ and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and **celebrate**; ²⁴ for this son of mine was **dead** and has come **to life again**; he was **lost** and has been **found**.' And they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. 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 became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. ²⁹ But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; ³⁰ but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

Introduction

Today we are going to listen to Jesus. In particular, the parable of the lost son a.k.a. the Prodigal Son. In the story of the Prodigal Son, we see the stages of faith journey for every believer in Christ. I can identify the following four.

- Rebellion: Independence of God / Sin
- Realization: Rock Bottom
- Repentance: Remorse + Turn Around
- Restoration: Joy in Heaven

Content

Rebellion:

- The story begins with the younger son's declaration of independence to his father, "Father, give my inheritance!" (v. 12). "I'm going solo!!" (v. 13). Likewise, when we were outside the salvation, when we didn't know Christ, we all declared our independence to God our Heavenly Father.
- Independence of God means that we refuse to be under the control of God. We choose to be in charge of our own lives, rejecting God. We want to be the King in our lives. Did you know that's exactly where sin starts? E. g. Satan's temptation to Eve: *You don't need God in your life. You will become like God. You can be your own god* (Genesis 3:5). E.g. A high school friend of mine wanted to be free from church rules and regulations.
- Such rebellion against God / declaration of independence to God is called sin in the Bible. Everyone has gone astray like sheep (Isaiah 53:6—*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way;..*)

Realization:

- For a while, after he left home, the Prodigal Son had a great time. Nobody told him what to do. He did everything he wanted to do. He sought after the loose life filled with drinking, women, gambling, and partying with bad company (v. 13). Now, all the money has gone.
- To make things worse, there was a severe famine in the region (v. 14). He, then, had to support himself. He got a job. Not a decent one, but a pig-herd. In Jewish mindset, that was a worst job ever. Below human dignity. You would rather die than being a pig farmer.

- Even with the lowest job, things weren't going well. The famine in the land made everyone struggle and many starved. The Prodigal Son didn't get paid on time. In fact, **no one was giving him anything** (v. 16) even the food. He was so hungry that he tried to feed himself with pods—the pig food. Even with that, it was not easy to get.
- Then, he came to realize how miserable he was (v. 17). He “hit the rock bottom,” so to speak. He realized that he couldn't go on like that forever. He missed his good-old-days. He wanted to go back home.
- After the rebellion against God, at some point of time, we all reach this point of realization: Without God, we become miserable on our own—we need God. We are far better off in God's hands than in our own control. E.g. In my teenage years, I realized that I needed God in my life. Ravi Zacharias—needed meaning and purpose in life.

Repentance:

- The Prodigal Son was ashamed of what he had done. He thought to himself, “*I have sinned against heaven, and in my father's sight;*” (v. 18). He was so remorseful that he didn't think himself worthy to be his Father's son again. He would rather be happy to be just one of his Father's servants.
- One day, despite his shame and guilt, he decided to return to his Father. He got up and started his journey homeward. Nothing could stop him from going back home.
- Imagine that he felt sorry for what he had done, yet, he was too ashamed to go back to his Father and indeed never took the first step toward home. Imagine that he stayed there at the pig farm until he died. Spiritually speaking, it means, he had remorse, yet had not repented.
- Repentance is two-fold: **remorse and return**. Let's say I have done something wrong before God. To feel guilty and sorry about what I have done is only the first half of repentance. The second half is more important: change. Turn around. Return to God the Heavenly Father. Anyone can be overwhelmed with guilt, shame, and with Satan's accusations, yet if they remain right there failing to turn around from sin and going into the right direction, it is no longer repentance. Remorse is only half of the repentance. Complete turnaround is the other half. E.g. changing the train after you realize you are on the wrong train.

Restoration:

- As soon as the Father saw his son walking toward home, He was filled with **compassion** (v. 20). He ran toward him. He embraced him and kissed him. Note: His compassion: ‘guts’--the innermost seat of emotions were moved--the same

compassion as Jesus' (Mark 6:34). The same compassion as that of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33).

- The Father ordered the ring—the symbol of the son-ship—to be placed back in the hand of his son. Robe and sandals as well. It means the complete restoration of the son's status in the family. No longer a prodigal or a servant but a rightful heir in the family. Furthermore, the Father threw a party to celebrate the return of his “dead” son, now alive. Lost, but now found.
- In the same way, when we first believed in Jesus and repented of our sins, our broken/dead relationship with our Heavenly Father was completely restored and joyfully celebrated in God's family. Our spirit that was once dead became alive again.
- The best part of the Gospel is joy and celebration in Heaven on the return of a sinner. E.g. When you first became a born-again believer, genuinely sorry for your sins before God and took the first step toward Heavenly Father in repentance, angels in Heaven in the presence of God have thrown a welcome party on your behalf.

Conclusion

- The party in Heaven is still going on. Everyday. Every month. Everywhere in the world. Wherever the prodigal return to the Heavenly Father. In America. In China. In Africa. In India. In home. In jail. You name it.
- Let's not forget. We had our own celebrations. Now, we are called to bring our lost brothers and sisters back into God's family. When they return to God, you and I will join the heavenly party with angels in the presence of God celebrating their return to God's family.
- Let's pray.