



Campbell Chapel

Sermon by Bob Bradley



What rejoices your heart?

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Luke 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

Luke 15:26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

Luke 15:27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

Luke 15:28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

Luke 15:29 And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

Luke 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Luke 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

Luke 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

This is a story, part of the story, about the prodigal son. You all know that story, no doubt, very well.

It is about a man that had two sons. The younger came to him one day and said unto his father, "Give me the portion of goods that belongs to me because I want to get out of here. I don't want to be here no longer. I don't want to be under your authority. I don't want to have to listen to you. I want to go and do my own thing and live my own way. Just let me go. I'm going to do what I want to do."

Scripture tells us that his father divided unto him his living. The Bible also tells us that not many days after this that this young fellow got all he had together and he takes a trip. He goes into a far country.

I think about myself, in years past. I think about myself when I was home. I think myself when I was young. There were times in life that I thought dad had absolutely no sense at all. There were times that I thought he had absolutely lost his mind, that he was crazy, and that he did not know what he was talking about. I also thought those thoughts about mom and other people that were in authority and those that were trying

to teach me right, and those that were trying to guide me in the right direction. I thought those thoughts and probably if most of us would be honest here tonight, we probably thought some of the same thoughts sometimes when we were younger.

This young man was very blessed to have a dad that loved him, to have a father that loved him and cared about him. I know that because of the story. Don't you? I know that he loved him. He cared about him.

However, sometimes in life; it doesn't matter how much we love people, how much a father loves a son or a daughter; but do you know what is going to happen? The son or daughter is going to go and do whatever they want to do. They are going to go and they are going to do. It does not matter how much father loves them, or how much mother loves them, or how much family loves them. Sometimes children are just going to go and do whatever they want to do in life. Even though they have been warned, even though sometimes, they have been told where they are going and the direction they are going and what is going to happen; they still yet go in those ways. Again, sometimes, we don't think dad knows what he is doing.

Sometimes, in life, we even look at the God of heaven and we think, Lord, you couldn't know what you are doing. Lord, you could not know what you are doing to allow these things to happen, to allow these things to come about in our lives. We have seen all the disaster and the things that are happening. I want you to understand something tonight. I may not understand it but God knows what He is doing. He knows exactly what He is doing. God never makes a mistake, my friend. He never does anything that is wrong. He never does anything that is backward. God never does anything...and everything that God does is always right. We need to understand that in our Christian lives. Sometimes life is tough and sometimes things get rough in life. However, if we are saved today; God has us in the hallow of His hand. He knows exactly what He is working out in our lives. If we will just trust Him through the times that are rough and times that we may not think that it is ever going to go away. If we will just trust the God of heaven, do you know what the God of heaven will do? He will take us through any problem, any situation that may come our way.

I think about this young man. He loaded up everything he had. The Bible says he goes into a far country. I don't know how far he went. I don't know how far it was from where he was living to where he got. However, I know the Bible says that it was in a far country.

I think about people today, who sits in church pews. Do you know what they do a lot of times? They go into a far country. They walk away from God. They walk away from their Father's love. Do you know what they may do? They never change geography. The place where they are at is the place they may have been for 50 years, but they walk away from God. They go. They go into a far country. This young man, that is exactly what he did.

He goes into a far country. The Bible says that he wasted everything that he had. Everything that his father had worked for, all of his inheritance that could have been used for something that was good. No doubt, his father and his family had worked for and sweated for and labored for, but he just threw it all away. He wasted everything that he had.

Do you know what we do? Sometimes in life, we waste our life. We waste our substance.

I have said here many times. I have stood beside the bed of people that are dying who looks you straight in the face and said, "...I have wasted my life. I have just thrown away my life."

Listen. Life is going by very quickly and we don't have any time to waste. You, young people are going to wake up one day and you are going to look back and forty years are going to be gone just like that. It goes by in a hurry.

This young man wasted everything he had. Everything that his dad had given him, everything that he had worked for; he wasted it and it was all gone.

That happens sometimes in life. Sometimes we make the wrong choice. Sometimes, I have made the wrong choice. Sometimes, you have made the wrong choice. Amen! We have. Sometimes we waste what God has given us. It may not necessarily be money. However, sometimes we waste something that is a whole lot more valuable than money. That is time. We waste time so much. We waste time. We get involved in things and stuff and we listen to things and it gets our mind all involved in all kinds of stuff. We just waste time.

Listen. I have said this many times. We don't have any time to waste. We have people that are dying in your family and in my family. We have people that are dying lost. People who have lived and wasted their life and they are dying unsaved. Do you know what we don't have? We don't have time to waste. We should be taking the gospel message unto them just as quick as we can because your family, your children, my children, my grandchildren. Do you know what is going to happen one day? They are going to go out to meet the God of heaven. Do you know what? People needs to be saved. Your family needs to be saved. We don't need to be wasting time that God has given us to be a witness unto this world. We need to be evangelistic more today than we have ever been in the history of all the church. I believe that.

Do you know what I also believe? There are many opportunities out there for us. amen! We allow the devil to scare us and bluff us. Listen. We don't have time to waste. This kid wasted it all. He woke up in a hog pen.

I don't know whether you ever raised any pigs or not, but years ago, when we were home, as kids; we raised pigs. If you want to see something filthy and nasty and stinking; all you have to do is just get about a hundred feet of the hog pen and you can

smell it. amen! You get it on you and you can't get it off of you. Truth! You can wash and scrub but that smell is hard to get off.

However, that is the same place this young man had got. He got down to a place; he was in a hog pen. That is where sin will take us to. That is where rebellion against the God of heaven will take us to. It will take us to the hog pen. I don't know how long it took this young man to get from father's house to the hog pen. It may have been a week. It may have been a month. It may have been years. I don't know how long it took him, but I do know one thing. When we walk away from the God of heaven, we are starting down a road, down; and we are going to continue to go down and down and down until we come to ourselves like this young man did. He came and woke up one day. He came to himself. Do you know what he starts thinking about? He starts thinking about home. He starts thinking about how good that even the servants back home have it. They have bread enough to eat and here I am starving to death, down here in this hog pen.

Sin will take you places that you never ever thought you would go to. It will take you down. It will humiliate you. Sin will separate from the love of your family. Sin will separate you from the love of Almighty God. God loves us and God cares about us, but do you know what it does? When we walk away from God, God surely still yet loves us. However, we lose the favor of Almighty God.

When he was in the hog pen do you know what he did not have? He did not have dad's favor down there. He had dad's favor back home, but he did not have it in the hog pen. We need to remember that. He said the servants have food to eat and I am starving to death. He said, this is what I am going to do. I am going to go to my father and this is what I am going to tell him. I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no more worthy to be called your son. Just make me one of your hired servants. That is all I want. That is what he said.

It is good to come to ourselves sometimes. We use to come to Jesus meetings you know. It is good that we have them from time to time. This old boy needs them every now and then. If you would be honest, you do too. There are times that we need to go out back and allow God to clean us up some. We need to be taken to the wood shed sometimes and allow the gospel message of Jesus Christ to line us up and clean us up. Do you know? It is because we have been in the hog pen. We have been down there. We have wasted time. We have wasted everything that God has given us. We need to have a meeting with Jesus.

Do you know what this guy was going to do? He was going to come home and he was going to say, "Dad, I'm sorry. I have sinned against you. I've sinned against heaven. I am not worthy any longer to be called thy son. Just make me one of your servants." That is exactly what he did. He starts going home. He starts back down that road home.

I have been there before. Did you ever have to go and tell somebody you are sorry. Did you ever have to go and say, "Hey, I've messed up. I should not have done that." Do you know what? If you have been a Christian I'd say you have. If you have not then you probably should have, on more occasions than once.

This young man—do you know what he was going to have to do? He was going to make an apology. "Dad, I'm wrong. Dad, I've sinned. Dad, I have messed up." However, when he gets there the father is looking for him.

Isn't it great today, even though we get into hog pens, and we get a long way from God, there is a God in heaven that is still yet looking for people who goes wayward. God is still yet looking for sinners to come home. I'm glad that not only is He looking for the but also, when they get there, when we get there; do you know what God will do? He will clean us up. Then He will have a party. Amen! That is what they are going to do here.

They are going to have a party. Do you like having parties? (giggles) There is no test at the end of this. Okay. Do you like having parties? You do. Don't you? You like to have fun.

Here is a guy that is lost. He has been in a hog pen wasting everything that his dad gave him. He probably did not smell good at all. He probably stunk. Here he comes walking home and dad sees him. The father sees him. Do you know what he does? When you read down through the story, you will find out down through here that the son is going to tell him, "Father, I have sinned against you and against heaven and am no longer worthy to be called your son." However, he did not get quite that far. When the father sees him do you know what he does? He arose and he came to his father. When he was a great way off, the Bible says, the father saw him and had compassion on him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. This son that had been wallowing in the hog pen is going to come back and tell dad he is sorry, but he did not get that far. His father knew how he felt. When he sees him coming, do you know what the father does? He runs. People during this time in history did not run; old men especially. They did not run. They did not run at all. You could not get one to run. Do you know what? This father was glad his son was home. This father was glad his son was home.

We talked about last week, or two weeks ago about rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than 99 just persons that need no repentance. Do you remember? We were talking about that.

This father was glad to see his son. Do you know why? Because he was lost. He did not know where he was at. He had been in danger. He had been away from home. He had been in a place where father could take care of him. Now he sees him. Now he is where he can run, hug and kiss him and throw his arms around his neck. Do you know why? Because dad, his father was glad that he was home.

Do you know what God does? It rejoices the heart of Almighty God when people come home, when people repent, when people are willing to say God I'm sorry. "God, I have

messed up. Lord I am sorry. I shouldn't have done that. I should not have taken that trip. I should not have gone that way. I should not have done all of that. Lord, I am sorry. There is no doubt as I read the scripture, I know this. It rejoices the heart of Almighty God when His children will simply be honest with Him and say I have messed up. Amen!

Everybody sitting in the room and everybody listening to me tonight; there have been times in your life, in your Christian life that you have messed up. Everybody sitting here has messed up. Isn't it great also that we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous which is the propitiation for our sins, not for our sins, but for the sins of the world. Isn't it great that we have someone that when we go to Him and say, "Father, please forgive me. I have sinned. I did what I should not have done. I did what I know that I should not have done, but I did it anyway. Please forgive me." The guilt and the shame that we have and all the raging that goes on inside when we are not where we should be with God. Our conscious has been defiled and we feel horrible on the inside. Do you know what God does? He just cleans all of that up. He puts us back in the right relationship with Him. He puts us back in our sonship. Amen! He cleans us up. That is what happens.

Do you know what they do here? The father tells them, "Hey, go get the fatted calf." He tells them here, "Go, get a robe and put on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it. Let's eat and be merry. For this my son that was dead and is alive again, was lost and now is found. They began to be merry." That is the story about a young man that was self-righteous, that was self-willed. He knew more than he thought his father did. He said, I want to leave. I don't want to be under your authority anymore. I don't want you telling me what I am going to do. I am my own person. I am my own man. Let me go." And he did.

He gets in a hog pen. He comes to himself and he comes back. Dad receives him. He forgives him. He hugs him. He kisses him. They bring a robe. There is a good message in that but we don't have time for that one tonight. They put a robe on him. They put a ring on his finger—sonship. They put shoes on his feet. Do you know what? Only those that wore shoes were part of the family. Servants did not wear shoes. Get that. This kid had some shoes on—they put them on his feet.

They were having a great time. They had killed the calf. They were having a party. Now something is going to happen here and this is my whole thought tonight. While this family is rejoicing that one of their sons were lost and is now found; they were rejoicing and having a great time. The elder son comes from the field. I can picture this fellow in my mind. I don't know how old he was. I don't know a lot about him but I do know one thing. He was a fellow who was in bad shape spiritually. He was a fellow that was in horrible shape spiritually. He was a fellow that did not love his brother. He had no respect for dad. He had no respect for nothing. He was a very self-righteous individual. I am going to prove that to you. He was a very self-righteous individual.

The Bible says here...

Luke 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

He was in the field. There is a thought there.

Luke 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

Here he comes. There is something that can be said for this guy working. There is something that can be said for that. There is something to be said for him to be in the field. As I read this story, and as I thought in my mind; do you know what the elder was not thinking about the younger? He thought nothing at all about the younger. He probably was glad he was gone. Because when he gets back here, he is not glad to see him. He is not glad to see him at all. He wished he would have just stayed, in my mind, and I think what the Bible is teaching; he wished he would have just stayed gone. Here he is in the field. He is in the field. He is away from the house. He is away from dad. He is away from the things that went on in the home. He is in the field. There is a lot that can be said about that. I'm not sure whether he is working or not. I really don't know that for sure, but he wasn't at home. He was in the field. He is coming back home and as he is getting close to home; he hears music. He hears dancing. He hears a party going on. He says, "Hey, what is happening here? What is going on at the house?"

Luke 15:27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

We are having a party. Your brother that was lost—we did not know where he was at and thought he was dead; he is home now. He is safe. He is sound. Everybody was so happy. Everybody was happy but this dude. He wasn't happy at all.

It concerns me when God blesses people and it makes other people mad. That concerns me. It concerns me when God saves people and forgives people, and cleanses people and that makes other people mad. There is something wrong somewhere folks in your life. There is something wrong in your relationship with God when you can't rejoice when God's people are rejoicing. There is something wrong down in here. You can take that for whatever it is worth. You can say, I don't believe that. It doesn't matter whether you believe that or not. It is truth. When God is blessing and people are rejoicing and people are praising God and you can't do that and you won't do that then there is an issue between you and God. Your issue is not with people. You might make people your issue. However, your issue is really with God. Your issue is your relationship with God. Your relationship with God is not what it should be.

When this young man comes home. The father receives him. They are having a grand time of rejoicing and you are mad about it. There is something bad wrong there. This is

where the elder *brother* is at. That is where he is at. He is not happy at all that he has come home. He is sure not happy that his dad has killed the fatted calf and they are having a party. That is the last thing he wanted to do. Isn't that sad?

Isn't that sad when God changes a sinner's life, someone that is hardened in sin, someone that has rebelled against God all their life, someone that may be living very wicked and God forgives them and we don't like it? There is something wrong somewhere. There is absolutely something wrong somewhere. Amen!

If you feel that way, you may want to examine your heart. You may want to see where you stand before God. If you don't want to be around people who are forgiven then you sure don't want to go to heaven. Amen! If you don't want to be around people that is going to be praising God then you sure don't want to go to heaven. If you don't want to be around people that is going to be exalting the God of heaven and praising Him for all He has done; you are going to the wrong place because that is what is going to be going on in heaven.

This fellow here is upset. The Bible says he was angry. When he heard about what was going on—his brother is home. He had been lost. They did not know where he was at. I don't know how long he had been gone. I don't know anything about that. However, as far as his family was concerned; he was dead. That is what the scripture says. They thought he was dead. He was gone and never came back. However, he comes back. They are having a party. The elder brother finds out what is going on and he gets mad.

Luke 15:28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

Get this. He was angry. Look what the next thing it says. He would not go in. Get that!

They are having a party. They might have had cake and ice cream. I don't know. They are having a party. They are having a great time. He is probably standing outside looking through the window and he can hear the music. He can hear and see the dancing. He can see and hear all the laughter that is going on. However, he is in such a shape spiritually that he won't even go in. Does that tell you how bad a shape this guy was in? He was in a horrible shape spiritually. He was mad because his brother had come home.

I hope you don't get there. I hope you never get there because that would be a horrible place to be. That would be a lonely place to be. That would be sad place to be. That would be a miserable place to be. To see people coming and seeing God forgive people, and seeing God transform and change people's lives and you are mad about it. You may want to check and see if you are really saved or not. The devil may have slipped you a counterfeit. The devil is a cunning individual. He is very slick and he is very shrewd.

Listen. I would worry about where you stand with God; I'm not judging when I say this, if it upsets you when people are forgiven then there is something bad wrong. God is a God of love. If Jesus Christ went to the cross and died for someone to be forgiven and that makes you mad—I don't know man. You had better do some digging. You had better where you stand with Almighty God because there is something bad wrong.

This fellow here, the elder son; he was so angry and so mad that he would not even go inside. He sees what is going on. He hears what is going on but he would not go in.

Get this. The father hears that he is outside. The father, the Bible says here in the rest of that verse, he goes out.

Luke 15:28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

“Come on in. We are having a party! Come on in! Your brother that was lost and he is found. He has come home. Come on in! We are rejoicing. We are having a good time.” You would have thought this brother would have been excited to go in. Wouldn't you? You would have thought that he would have been excited. It excites me when people get saved. I like to pray with them. Don't you? I like to be at the altar praying with them. I like to be around where people are praying that has been lost and has come home. Don't you? That is an exciting time.

This is what the elder son is saying to his father now.

Luke 15:29 And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

His father comes out and tries to get him to come in. Pleads with him and begs him to come in. He says...

Luke 15:29 And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

Do you know what he is saying? I have done everything you told me to. I have never done anything wrong. I have followed your instruction. I have done what you said. I have done everything you wanted me to do, but you never gave me a party. You never had a party for me.

Luke 15:29 And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

I have done what I was supposed to do. I followed all the do's and don'ts. You said, go and I went. You said come and I came. You said feed the cattle and I went.

Get something about this guy that is different from the other young man. This elder son was a very self-righteous guy in that he did what his father told him but not out of love. He did not obey his father because he loved his father. He obeyed his father because it was something that he thought was expected of him. Get that. There is a difference there.

There is a major difference in why we do what we do. There is a major difference there in why and the reasoning behind what we do. We may do things because of out of fear.

When I was home, there were things that I did because dad said if you don't do it I am going to beat you. I did it. I did not love it. amen! I did it because I was going to get beat. However, there was some things I did because I loved dad. There were some things that I did not do because I loved dad. There was something that I did not do because I did not want to break dad's heart. There were some things that I did not do because I did not want to disgrace my dad's name. I did that out of love. Some things I did not do out of love.

However, this guy was self-righteous. He obeyed all the rules. That is what self-righteous people do. I do religious stuff. I tithe. I go to church. I do this. I participate in religious things. However, they do it with all the wrong motives. They do not do it out of love.

Listen. What we do if we do not do it out of love; we are wasting our time. If we are not motivated by love, we are wasting our time.

This fellow said, "Hey, you never killed a kid for me. You never let me have a party with my family and my friends. You never did that." The says here...

Get this.

Luke 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

He was so mad. He was so angry. He was so self-righteous that he would not even call his brother, his brother.

Luke 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

He calls him. "Father, this is your son. He is not my brother. He is your son." Amen! Don't ever do that.

Listen. If I belong to the Father, and you belong to the Father; we are His sons. Amen! It doesn't matter what we think about that.

Luke 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Self-righteous people; do you know what they do? They want to try to make other people look bad to make themselves look good. That is what this guy was doing. I have never devoured your living. I have never run and loafed with the harlots. I have never wasted your money. I have never done that. However, as soon as he comes, you kill the fatted calf. You have a party.

Luke 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Luke 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

Do you know what he wants his elder son to know? Everything I have is yours. You have never left. Everything that I have is yours.

We are heirs and we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. We have an inheritance. A great inheritance. This elder, self-righteous son wouldn't even speak of his brother as his brother. He is mad. He is upset. He does not want to be a part of the fun. If I can't be the center of this show then I don't want to be a part of it. That is sad. That sounds like a free will Baptist preacher. Doesn't it? amen! In a lot of places. The Bible says...

Luke 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

It was meet that we should make merry. In other words, it was right that we should have a party.

Luke 15:32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

He was lost. He was found. We should have had a party. We should be rejoicing and praising God. We should be having a good time. He was dead. He was lost. He has come home. Why shouldn't we be having a good time?

What does it take to rejoice your heart? What does it take? What does it really take to rejoice your heart, to make you feel joy on the inside? I'm not talking about being happy. We can be happy and listen to George Strait. I get happy doing that. Joy is totally different. Happiness depends on our circumstances. Circumstances brings joy or not joy. Happiness depends on our circumstances but joy depends on our relationship with God. What does it take to rejoice your heart?

Listen. How long has it been since there has been a party in your heart? How long has it been since you have spent some time alone with Almighty God and the music plays? People are shouting and praising God. How long has it been? How long has it been since you got alone with Almighty God and you prayed until you knew God heard you? How long has it been since God answered a prayer for you? How long has it been? Just answer that to yourself.

What does it take to rejoice your heart? What does it take to bring joy to your heart? If people are getting saved in Afghanistan tonight; do you know what we should be doing? We should be praising God. If they are getting saved in the church down the road tonight or over the hill; do you know what we should be doing? We should be praising God. People are lost, doomed, and damned. When they come to Jesus, it does not matter what color they are, or what nation they live in; we should be praising God.

What does it take to rejoice your heart? What does it take? I hope that spending time alone with God, spending time reading His Word, spending time talking, praying and seeking His face; I hope that rejoices your heart. It will when we live right. There is nothing like reading God's Word. Being alone and turning off the thing that robs us of so much joy today is that we have too many toys. By the time we get ready to read, or study our Bible then the phone rings, or we get a text, or this happens or that happens. Sometimes we would be a whole lot better off if we would turn them off and just get alone with God.

Come and pray—