

Sermon Transcript from 4th May 2025 – Luke 15:11-31

The Prodigal Son

Sermon TLDR

This sermon focuses on the concept of **seeing things differently**, using the parable of the **prodigal son** from Luke 15 as a central theme. The speaker [Bob.M] explains how the younger son was blinded by his desires and failed to see the value of his relationship with his father, drawing parallels to how people can be blinded to God's love. Various analogies are used to illustrate this idea of shifting perspective, including a red filter blocking other colours, the hidden arrow in the FedEx logo, microscopic views of skin, thermal imaging, and fans' differing views of football decisions.

Ultimately, the sermon highlights the **father's unconditional love and compassion**, symbolised by his welcoming of the returning son, and encourages listeners to adopt a similar **perspective of love and grace** towards others, rather than focusing on what they have done wrong.

Link to the Start of the Sermon (on YouTube)

<https://youtu.be/SyBmuDZIFMo?t=1333>

Sermon Transcript

So, just want to look at the characters in this story.

And I'm sorry I'm bringing in a bit of science here. So, it's people might start yawning as I try and use this analogy, but basically what we see here um in the parable of the of the two sons and the father, the youngest son, he only saw what he wanted to see.

And here's an analogy that we've got here of light going through a filter. And even though white light is made up of lots of different colours, as the little [text] there says, when we look through a red filter, we only see red. And it blocks out the other colours, the other aspects of uh the white light. And this really reflects on who God was through Jesus.

Jesus wanted us to see what God was like. through his life on earth. Unfortunately, there were a lot of things that got in the way and the younger son in our story did not see what he had in that relationship with his father and his sight was blocked with lots of other things.

And in our word search [earlier in the service], we looked at words like distant and starving, what he ended up like when he moved away from the father. And he had comparisons with his servants. and he ended up eating with the pigs. He was that low moving further and further away from his father because he did not see that relationship he had with his father and his family. All he saw was the money he was owed and how he could get to use it. And it did not last very long that money when it was in his control. He had so many things in that relationship and yet he didn't see it.

[SONG – Be Thou My Vision]

Good. Okay. So, this seems a very strange thing to put up [the FedEx logo] for the next bit, but I always kept this in my brain. Every time I go past one of those vans, because uh John Shepard from Slough Baptist shared this with me. Uh has everyone always seen that arrow in the FedEx? No, I have not seen

that arrow hiding in amongst that E and that X. So ever since he said that, I have always seen it. I have always seen it. Um and until he said it, I didn't see it and now I always see it.

[Luke 15] verse 17 says, "When he came to his senses, literally seeing that direction that God wanted him to go in in amongst all that noise around all that money, all the stuff he thought he had and God given him and to follow the way God was leading, literally putting aside all those distractions and if you like managed to find out the direction in amongst the noise around him.

And so I found that quite a good analogy and it reminds me every time I see one of those vans now which maybe that might be the case for you.

And another thing bringing in the idea of all that science at school, some of the things we look at around us, uh there is incredible depth that we go into without seeing what there actually is. For example, our skin through a microscope, those cells that we don't see and we go can go deeper and deeper and deeper into the nuclei and everything else like that. We see things differently when we see them at a different level.

And that strange picture there as well is a thermal imaging camera. And I'm sure a lot of you have seen that as well. And I used to work with cameras like that a long time ago by Chertsey Road Bridge. And I always remember one particular job that we had with thermal imaging cameras, and we had to work very late at night and I looked out before it got dark over the marshes there by the bridge and it was very tranquil and very quiet. And then as we carried on working, it got darker and darker and I couldn't see anything out the window. And suddenly I looked at the camera and there were hundreds of animals running around who thought they were in the dark, but I could actually see them.

And again, we can look at things in different ways. And these are some of the examples that science has helped us see things in different ways.

Another very real thing, Tony might go with this one, if you go to a football match and you see a game, how different the fans see decisions made by the referee. And I know it's very naughty, but I got a season ticket and I try not to swear at Wickham Wanderers. And it's around me, I've got to know the people around me and I really love it when the referee makes a controversial decision and everyone around me is moaning and I say I think that was perfectly reasonable and it doesn't go down too well.

But that's an example of if you like the way we see things differently and the whole of the parable um here is about that relationship with the son and his father and the way the father and the son saw things differently and the way they grew apart and the way they didn't understand what each one saw.

[SONG – Light of the World]

Okay. Then we have the incredible response of the father and this was doing something totally out of what people saw those days as the honour of the father. He ran to his son, some of the craft that I've put out u for the little ones if they had a chance to do it today was about Palm Sunday. And here Jesus was literally putting himself in the same position as that father who ran to his son. This wasn't the done thing for the father to show that sort of loneliness as it were to actually go to his son in that way and that's what Jesus did on Palm Sunday. The palms show something like victory and triumph from the people but also peace and people would lay out their coats in front of the donkey and showing that they wanted to actually submit to Jesus being that in that position. Um and our craft today hopefully sort of reminds us of those things of Palm Sunday.

And those words we found in the um word search were things like compassion and he got ready the fattened calf and the robe he put on his son and he celebrated his return summing up the joy of the father and what he did for when his youngest son turned up and this brings across everything that it's not power by force but power by love bringing us together. This only happens if we destroy the barriers between us just as the father did when he showed his love for his son.

He shed light on the problems, but he came to his son in a loving way.

The father looking at his son in a way of not who he is. Well, it was it was who he is rather than what he had done. And that was quite powerful. And then we have the sad story, the older brother who was not in that position. He literally played by the rules in that relationship with his father and he complained that he had not ever disobeyed him. He'd not squandered his money like the younger son had and he spoke like I've been slaving for you. He didn't have that relationship in a way that saw the younger son as someone coming back in a way that showed love.

I often hear this and it's quite sad in a way. I occasionally help out on the Street Angels in Windsor and they go around feeding some of the homeless guys and helping out some of the youngsters who have a bit too much to drink, shall we say, and have [been] left vulnerable on the streets. And I've often people hear people say they walk past saying they don't deserve it. Leave them alone. Come away from them. They don't deserve it.

And I often think what if it was my son or my daughter what would I think then and that's shows some of the relationship that sheds light on the relationship that God has with us some of the things that we've done wrong and yet wants us to come back to him in that way and so um that part of it really shows a really powerful story just want to really some of the things uh which get in the way and we've seen examples of that. I gave one on the street example.

Here's another one. I don't know if you've seen Sister Act with um Whoopy Goldberg playing Dolores and Maggie Smith playing Sister Mary Clarence. And Sister Mary Clarence was scared of the dangers of the community out of the monastery. And literally it was a church with a fence around it because they weren't willing to look differently at the community around them and the Sunday Services were literally empty because people weren't coming. They didn't want to see past the risk. Dolores came in as a showgirl and had to hide because being threatened of violence from her ex-partner who was a gang leader, but she came in and she saw things from a different viewpoint and literally broke the walls down and people came flooding in because of the love they showed those people. So that's that was a sort of an incredible picture for me.

So, this parable shows us what God has done for us. There are so many different ways of physically seeing things. Our eye physical eyes are amazing. With the help of technology, we can see even more. But we can look today at the eyes of our heart.

[image on screen with small print]

I saw this was on, sorry it's very very tiny but I'll read it out in a minute.

This is a picture from Catholics women's league of Canada and it reads it reads...

"My Lord Jesus you have risen to new life.

Give me new eyes with which to recognize your presence in the world around me.

Sharpen my vision so that I see beyond the ordinary events each day and into the extraordinary reality of your grace.

Brighten my view of the world with renewed hope in the coming of your kingdom.

Soften my gaze so that I view others with the kind of tenderness and compassion you showed to so many.

May each day of the Easter season provide glimpses of your glory in your sacred name I pray.

Amen."

Two weeks ago, we were celebrating Easter, and it starts with strange thing to celebrate in the eyes of the world, the death of someone who we believe was God's son who died on the cross, which meant sadness for his followers and those around him.

And yet, this is the very best good news.

And that goes some way in showing what Jesus has done for us as enabled us to see things differently around us. We are asked to see those around us differently. Like the loving father, the father looked at his

son who he is rather than what he had done. Does anyone know what comes before this parable in Luke 15?

Does anyone know the bit about the Bible?

What comes before this? Sorry. Coin. Yep. Yep. Any anything else? What comes before the parable of the coin? Sorry. Lost sheep. Yeah. Yeah.

And before that, it was actually the religious leaders and people telling Jesus off for being with the naughty people. And then Jesus gives the parable of the lost coin and the lost sheep and the prodigal son. He's inspired by them saying, um, stay away from those bad people.

And Jesus is saying, "No, look at it a different way. For all you good people, you should be really pleased for the bad people that I help out, that I see differently, that I see as someone that needs loving and care to bring closer to that." So, you leave the 99 sheep at home and come and sought out that one lost sheep.

And then he went on to tell the parable of the prodigal son and see the lost, how God sees the lost.

And that's really what behind what I was trying to say today.

I'm going to um have a go at putting the parable into a noisy version by me, and we'll see how it goes...

[Bob sings these words to guitar music; the words are on screen]

*Now this is a tale which is a parable
Principally a story about rise and fall
An everyday saga – you'll see what I mean
Picked from the Bible – Luke 15*

*The kid of the tribe said to his dad,
It's time I was out – it's driving me mad
I'm due all this cash – owed by you –
Don't mind how I get it – a cheque will do*

*You see its time – I reckon its best,
I know what's what – must leave the nest,
Its nothing personal – but its so true
A man's gotta do what a man's gotta do !*

*Things look real good when you have a lot
Not so bad at all
Things look real good when you call the shots
You do it on your own
But when you live for no one but yourself
Focusing on you
That's not how its meant to be
– its meant to be at all !*

*Off he went – pocket full of loot
Nice apartment – whistle and flute
Thought it cool – It now seems absurd
The nice young ladies hung on every word !*

*As time went on he drew many ""friends""
Luxury - parties - Mercedes Benz,
All that cash – he should have made his mark,
But his ""friends"" were parasites – his accountant – a shark !*

*There he was – his life was a wreck,
No FT comment, or shares in NasDeq
Not even change for a cough with a fag,
Home was a bridge with a plastic bag.*

*Things look real good when you have a lot
Not so bad at all
Things look real good when you call the shots
You do it on your own
But when you live for no one but yourself
Focusing on you
That's not how its meant to be
– its meant to be at all !*

*He struggled and he fought but come what may,
He knew deep down there was only one way,
His pride had to go – he'd have to lose face,
He'd go crawling back to his old man's place*

*When it got late pride gave up the fight
For the best time to crawl is late at night
At his lowest point - I suppose
So weak from freedom over dose*

*Look at the things you count as real wealth
Not so good at all
Look at the things which lure and tempt your eyes
Time will see them fall
Its God love for you and other men
Which will last for ever more
Its un-con-ditional – un-con-ditional*

*Words were not enough for when the boy came home,
No talk of pay back or an interest free loan,
No mention by the father of his incredible pain,
A sad, sad place never visited again*

*Look at the things you count as real wealth
Not so good at all
Look at the things which lure and tempt your eyes
Time will see them fall
Its God love for you and other men
Which will last for ever more
Its un-con-ditional – un-con-ditional*

Let's pray.

Father Lord, thank you for the compassion you have for us when we stray away. Thank you for the love for us. When we do things wrong, thank you that your love is unconditional. We don't earn it, we don't work for it, but you love us anyway. Help us to see things as you see things, to see the world in a way in which is needed, which needs your love. And help us play a part in making that love spread. amongst those around us.

Thank you Lord.

Amen.