

The Proud Son: The Danger of Bitterness, Jealousy, and Pride

Sermon Title: The Proud Son
Preacher: Rev M Muzangaza | 11/10/2026
Church: Harvest Of Souls Ministries UK (HOSMUK)
Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32
Theme: The Danger of Bitterness, Jealousy, and Pride

Introduction: The Context of the Parables

Church, when we look at **Luke 15**, we traditionally call it the chapter of the "lost" things. We preach about the **Lost Sheep**, the **Lost Coin**, and the **Lost Son**. But to truly grasp the weight of Christ's message today, we must look at the setting.

Luke 15:1-3 tells us that tax collectors and notorious sinners were drawing near to Jesus to hear Him. What were they listening to? They were responding to the core message found in **Mark 1:14-15**: *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."*

Let's understand who these listeners were:

- **The Tax Collectors:** They were a sting in the flesh of the Jewish community. They were despised as traitors because they were employed by the Roman oppressors to collect money from their own brothers. They were seen as brutal, corrupt, and completely cut off from the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- **The Sinners:** These were individuals whose lifestyles were socially and morally incompatible with the community—prostitutes, drunkards, and outcasts.

Yet, these very outcasts were highly responsive to the Gospel! Think of Zacchaeus, Mary Magdalene, and the woman caught in adultery. They heard the call to repent, and they moved.

But this movement sparked outrage. The Pharisees and scribes—the religious elite—became angry, bitter, jealous, and intensely proud. They levelled a heavy accusation against Jesus' ministry.

The Father's Defence: Equal Value

In response to their murmuring, Jesus tells three stories to defend His ministry. He shows them how God counts value:

- **The 99 and the 1:** Every single sheep matters. The shepherd secures the 99 to chase after the one that is missing because His love is undivided.
- **The 9 and the 1:** Every coin has value. The woman needs the full amount; she won't accept a partial treasure.
- **The Two Sons:** Both are children of the same Father. The Father loves them equally. When one is lured away, the Father's heart breaks with grief, and He stands at the edge of the property daily, watching for the horizon, waiting for the missing child to come home.

The Parable's Turning Point: Two Responses

Jesus' answer to the Pharisees is simple: **The outcasts have come to their senses (Luke 15:17).**

Like the prodigal son, tax collectors and sinners have realized their choices were ruinous. They are turning back with genuine sorrow, humility, and remorse. Look at Zacchaeus, offering to pay back four-fold what he stole! They are living out **Luke 15:18-19**: *"I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"*

And what is the Father's response? **Compassion.** God cannot and will not reject a heart broken by true humility and tears.

But then, the story shifts. The Father must now turn and make a heart-breaking appeal to His elder brother. The Father actually steps out of the party, humbles Himself, and begs the older son to be considerate—to accept his own flesh and blood.

Four Toxic Lessons from the Older Brother

Through the character of the elder son, Jesus exposes the deadly spiritual condition of the Pharisees—and warns us of the exact same dangers today.

1. Pride Gives Birth to an Unhappy Heart

“These many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time...” (Luke 15:29)

Pride blinds us to our own need for grace. The older brother looked at his track record and felt entitled. When you serve God out of pride, you serve with a ledger, keeping score. It drains your joy and leaves you with a miserable, self-righteous heart.

2. Anger Makes a Person Unforgiving

“But he was angry... ‘you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.’” (Luke 15:28-29)

Notice his complaint: “You never gave *me* a goat.” But the text implies a sharp question: *Did you ever ask?* The Father’s wealth was entirely available to him, but anger blinded him to his own inheritance. Anger locks us out of the celebration and makes us hold grudges over things that were always within our reach.

3. Bitterness Calls for Revenge

“But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.” (Luke 15:30)

Bitterness demands an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. It views harsh justice and revenge as the only acceptable options. Notice his language: he doesn’t call him *my brother*; he calls him *“this son of yours.”* Bitterness detaches us from relationship. It wanted the younger brother banished, not restored. Church, if you reach a point where you simply cannot stand to have certain people around you, check your heart—you are carrying bitterness.

4. Jealousy Refuses Reconciliation

“...you killed the fatted calf for him.” (Luke 15:30)

Jealousy cannot stand to see someone else blessed, especially someone we deem unworthy. The older brother would have felt vindicated if the younger brother came back to eat scraps, or if the Father had killed a lean, sickly calf. But the fatted calf? The ultimate celebration? Jealousy refuses to reconcile when grace flows abundantly to someone else.

Conclusion & Final Message

Beloved, Jesus leaves the parable open-ended because the Pharisees—and we ourselves—have to choose how the story ends. Today, the Holy Spirit is giving us a clear mandate:

1. **Forgive your brother.** Let go of the ledger of their past sins.
2. **Join the Father in the celebration.** Don’t stand outside the tent in resentment while heaven is rejoicing over a soul saved.
3. **Learn to do what is right.** Hear the words of the Father in **Luke 15:32**: *“It was right that we should make merry and be glad.”* It is spiritually right to celebrate restoration.
4. **Do not take offense at the sovereignty of the Father’s grace.** In heaven, the Father accepts both Stephen the martyr and Paul the persecutor. In Acts 2, the very same Jews who cried out for Christ to be crucified were the ones who repented, were forgiven, and were filled with the Holy Ghost.

Let us guard our hearts against the spirit of the older brother. Let us drop our pride, release our bitterness, and step into the joy of our Father’s house.

Amen.

The Invitation (Altar Call)

Church, the Father is standing at the door of the house today.

For some of you, you are like the younger son. You've been living in the far country. You feel the weight of your mistakes, your brokenness, and you think you've disqualified yourself from God's love. But you've heard the truth today—the moment you turn your face toward home, the Father is already running to meet you. He doesn't want to lecture you; He wants to restore you.

But for others here today, if we are completely honest before God, we have been standing outside the tent with the older brother.

You've been in the church a long time. You've worked hard, you've kept the rules, but somewhere along the way, a quiet poison crept in. You've become angry. You've become bitter toward someone who hurt you. You've been keeping a ledger of other people's faults, and you realize today that your heart has grown cold, proud, and unforgiving. You are physically inside the church, but spiritually, you are standing outside the Father's joy.

The Father is stepping out of the party right now to plead with you. He is saying, *"My child, everything I have is yours. Drop the ledger. Drop the bitterness. Come inside and be whole."*

The Call to Action

With every head bowed and every eye closed across this sanctuary:

- **If you are the younger son** and you need to come back to your senses today—if you need to repent, receive Christ's forgiveness, and come home to the Father—I want you to take a step of faith.
- **If you are the older brother** and you need God to break the spirit of pride, jealousy, or bitterness in your heart today—if you need the grace to forgive someone and step back into the Father's joy—this altar is for you too.

Wherever you are, if the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart, do not let pride keep you in your seat. Step out from where you are standing and come forward to this altar. Let the Father heal you today.

[Wait for people to come forward. Allow the worship team to play softly in the background.]

The Altar Prayer

"Father, we thank You for Your overwhelming, scandalous grace. We thank You that You love both the broken rebel and the self-righteous worker.

Lord, for those standing here who are coming home from the far country, wrap Your robes of righteousness around them. Wash away their past, cancel their shame, and let them know they are fully Your children.

And Father, for those of us who have harboured the spirit of the elder brother, we repent today. Forgive us for our pride. Cleanse us of bitterness. Pull out the roots of jealousy and resentment that have kept us chained. Give us a heart that beats like Yours—a heart that rejoices when the lost are found, and when the broken are restored.

We drop our arguments at this altar. We step into Your house, and we join the celebration. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, **Amen.**"