

12.24.17 - Awkward Family Christmas: Wayward

When coming home for the holidays underscores just how distant you feel from God or family, what do you do?

1. INTRO: Christmas Eve; This series has been underscoring the awkward in the holidays
 - a. Remember home alone? Movie about restored wayward relationships
 - b. Christmas is supposed to be a time of joy, peace, celebration
 - c. For many, it is a time of awkwardness - underscoring distance
 - i. Awkwardness in the family as the wayward child
 - ii. Sadness as a parent waiting for your child to come home
 - d. Spiritual waywardness...
 - i. Christmas reminds you of a faith that you used to have
 - ii. Christmas reminds you of a faith that your kids used to have
 - iii. Christmas reminds you of a faith you never had or angers you
2. SCRIPTURE, *Luke 15:11-32* (Parable of the Prodigal Son)
 - a. Jesus tells a story (three actually) in the context of the Pharisees accusing him of hanging out with nasty, dirty, undeserving people
 - b. 100 sheep, ten coins, two sons...
 - c. *11 He also said: "A man had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.' So he distributed the assets to them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living.*
 - i. Younger (less of a right to demand)
 - ii. Why would the Father allow this when he knows that it would break his heart? Love for his son, knowing what we need vs. what we want
 1. Ex: Buying electronics or video games for your kid
 - iii. This is how God interacts with us → he warns, he prompts, but ultimately he allows us to go wayward if that's what we want
 1. God didn't force you there
 - iv. You don't go wayward by accident; it is the result of incremental decisions
 - d. *14 After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. 15 Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to eat his fill from the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything.*
 - i. All fun and games until you run out of money and famine strikes
 - ii. Working for pig farmers (uh oh), wanting pig food (worse), and the pigs are acting like pigs - they won't even share!

1. Obviously they wouldn't share, they are greedy, we've played Angry Birds
- iii. He's hit his rock bottom
- e. *17 When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I'll get up, go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. 19 I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers."'*
 - i. We have moments of clarity → Ex: Addicts
 - ii. Spiritually this happens to us too, but we somehow fear the clarity
 1. Avoiding conversations b/c you deep down you know what is right
 2. We dodge God and push ourselves deeper into being wayward
 - iii. We avoid the clarity b/c in those moments of clarity, we realize that we are unworthy
- f. *20 So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. 21 The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

22 "But the father told his servants, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, 24 because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.

- i. He's walking, practicing his "I'm sorry" speech - ever do that?
- ii. But the Father sees him, as if he's waiting w/ binoculars... he is filled w/ compassion
 1. His heart went out to him, he's moved to pity
 2. He sprints to his son, throwing his arms around his neck, kissing him
 3. He's been waiting for him to come home
 - a. Ex: Parents, can you relate?!
- iii. The son, downtrodden and defeated, begins his speech, but the father's already way past that - he ran to him before the apologies began
- iv. He brushes it off as if to say, "Yes, Yes, and then yells for the servants"
- v. They shower him w/ all things he doesn't deserve → Think what he's done, his attitude, his actions, his smell
- vi. He throws a party! He doesn't welcome his son home through the back door, not wanting people to see this ragamuffin deadbeat, he exalts him
- g. *25 "Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he summoned one of the servants, questioning what these things meant. 27 'Your brother is here,' he told him, 'and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'*

- i. Shocked, incredulous → that idiot's back? Why a party? Why the calf that we've been saving for a special occasion? Why is he back at all?
 - h. *28 "Then he became angry and didn't want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 But he replied to his father, 'Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.'*
 - i. The younger son may have been brash, but the older son reveals his true heart. He hasn't viewed his diligence as loving serve to his father but as begrudged slavery.
 - ii. He may not be the son who ran away, but he is the bitter son who stayed, envious that his brother got to go sow his oats while he was responsible
 - iii. Why? B/C grace and mercy aren't fair. That's the point.
 - i. *31 "Son,' he said to him, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"*
 - i. There is a bigger reason for celebration - grace, life
 - ii. What was lost was found. What was dead is alive.
 - iii. This is true reason for celebration, for joy, for wonder
 - j. So, what does this teach about God, about mankind, and about Christmas?
3. GOD
 - a. **God is our loving Father.**
 - i. He patiently waits for us to come home...
 - b. **God's compassion knows no limit.**
 - i. He loves the unloved, the one with no redeemable qualities...
 - c. **God runs to us to, not the other way around.**
 - i. He's not some stern father w/ his arms crossed waiting for a good excuse
 - ii. Parents: if your wayward child came home tomorrow in true sorrow, you'd embrace him/her. Why? Because God has given shadows of his character in us
 - iii. Ex: Saul, Acts 9
 - d. **God rejoices over us and lavishes us with gifts.**
 - i. He exalts the one who doesn't deserve to be exalted...
 - ii. A robe, a ring, sandals, a celebration w/ dancing
4. OURSELVES: You are supposed to see yourself in this story...
 - a. We can relate to the prodigal son:
 - i. **We think we are better off without God, without authority, making our own decisions.** Give me my inheritance and let me live my life, dad.
 - 1. Genesis 3 and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - ii. **We are foolish, squandering good gifts on temporary pleasures.**
 - 1. Ex: Me looking at this BB-8 Robot trying to justify buying it
 - 2. Instead of spending money on eternal purposes, we waste it

- iii. **Eventually, we all hit our pig pen**
 - 1. We tend not to do a whole lot until we hit that stage
 - 2. Some might not hit it until they are at death's door
 - b. If we are honest, we can also relate to the bitter son who stayed:
 - i. How hard it is for those who don't understand grace to celebrate grace given towards others
 - 1. Stems from the belief that we have righteousness by works
 - a. False entitlement; Jealousy (something we have will be taken away); Envy (we want what someone else has);
 - b. We tend to think we are better than we are (the list, v29)
 - 2. OR We forget the sin from which we've been saved (2 Peter 1:9)
 - ii. grace and mercy aren't fair. That's the point.
5. CHRISTMAS
 - a. Jesus, Immanuel, is God coming to us to rescue us from the pig pen
 - b. This Christmas and all of this is impossible without Christ
 - c. The prodigal son is enslaved to sin (seeing his need)
 - d. The bitter son is enslaved to the Law (thinking he can earn a gift)
 - e. Jesus is the fattened calf
 - f. The Holy Spirit is signet ring
 - g. The robe is the Righteousness of Christ
 - h. The sandals are the readiness of the gospel as he gives purpose and calling
 - i. The music and dancing is the celebration of heaven on behalf of sinners saved (v7, v10, v23-24)
6. WHAT WILL YOU DO:
 - a. At the end of the day, this is a spiritual story about reconciliation and relationship
 - b. Spiritually, you might be the prodigal... Spiritually, you might be the bitter son...
 - i. **ACTION: This Christmas, embrace grace**
 - ii. 'Might not even see your need yet (Discovering God card)
 - c. If this is describing your life (parent and a child), what do you do?
 - i. **ACTION: This Christmas, embrace grace**
 - ii. Behave like the Father has behaved towards you
 - iii. Grace upon grace upon grace
 - d. Christmas is about gifts. Grace means gift, favor; Christmas is God offering a gift in the a tiny baby Jesus
 - e. Jesus would grow to be a man, live a perfect life, and die. Why? That you and I might live.
 - f. He came to the pig pen, died so that we could escape, and then conquered death to bring us home.
 - g. Grace isn't fair. The gospel isn't fair. Christmas isn't fair. It's about unfair grace for us.
 - h. **This Christmas, embrace grace.** The grace God offers, but doesn't force you to take. Follow Jesus. Trust in Jesus. Surrender to Jesus.