

*Gratitude - It's Not Too Late*

The Lakefront Church and First Baptist Church - Venice, Florida

One Church - Two Locations

February 8, 2026

Luke 15:1-2 (NLT) *Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach.<sup>2</sup> This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!*

Lost sheep... *<sup>7</sup>I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don't need repentance.*

Lost coins... *<sup>10</sup>I tell you, in the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who repents.*

*<sup>11</sup>He also said, "A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup>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. <sup>13</sup>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.*

*<sup>15</sup>Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He longed to eat his fill from the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything. <sup>17</sup>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! <sup>18</sup>I'll get up, go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. <sup>19</sup>I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers." <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>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." <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup>because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" So they began to celebrate.*

1. He treated the Father's Resources as an Entitlement, not a gift.

*<sup>12</sup>... 'Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.'*

- Blessings from God are the Father's resources.

See: Deuteronomy 8:17-18a

- We rarely thank God for what we expect.

2. He Wanted Riches Without Relationship

*...gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country...*

- Treated his father as if the father were dead!

### 3. He Valued Freedom Over Relationship

- The son believed independence would bring fulfillment.
- "*Follow your heart. Don't let anyone tell you what to do,*" is a trap!

### 4. He Squandered What He Did Not Earn

*...where he squandered his estate in foolish living.*

- He treated blessings lightly because he didn't value the effort.

### 5. He Recognized Value After It Was Gone

*<sup>15</sup>Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He longed to eat his fill from the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything. <sup>17</sup>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!'*

- Hunger, loneliness, and humiliation awakened gratitude that comfort had neglected.

### 6. His Return Began with Restored Appreciation

*<sup>18</sup>I'll get up, go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. <sup>19</sup>I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.*

- True appreciation was born through repentance.

### 7. Rest in the Father's Response

*<sup>20</sup>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.*

- God, the Father, runs toward repentance — not away from it.

Come Home!