

## I. Expectations and the Parable of the Prodigal

### A. Occasion for the Occasion

1. Conversation: the effects of perceived expectations on the course of a relationship
2. Graduation Recognition: An opportunity to bring expectations to light for the future

### B. Expectations

1. Definition
  - a. a strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future.
  - b. a belief that someone will or should achieve something.
  - c. Anticipation that life will go the way you want, that people will act in a favorable way to your liking, or that the universe will follow your plans for the future
2. Types
  - a. Communicated
    - (1) General examples of communicated expectations
      - (a) College syllabus
      - (b) Job description
      - (c) Surgery recovery plan
    - (2) Can be spoken or written
    - (3) Expectation of a communicated expectation is the submission and effort of the recipient to conform to the terms of the stated expectation
      - (a) College professors expect students to do the work communicated in the syllabus
      - (b) Employers expect employees to accomplish the task assigned in the manner outlined in the job description
      - (c) Surgeons expect patients to follow post-surgical guidelines
      - (d) God expects human beings who are sensitive to His Spirit to conduct themselves in faithfulness to His revealed word!
  - b. Perceived
    - (1) Generally: unspoken, unwritten expectations assumed by others that are based on personal interpretations of social interactions
    - (2) Perceived expectations may or may not be accurate or they may be accurate but not absolute
      - (a) Accurate or inaccurate
        - i) Cell phones off in theaters and church: common perceived expectation that is accurate
        - ii) You have to be over fifty to serve the Lord in the church is an inaccurate perception of expectations.
      - (b) Accurate but not absolute:
        - i) Parking at Bernice Howard's funeral
          - a) Request for members to park above was accurate
          - b) Expectation was not absolute: they it was not announced, there was no expectation that

persons physically incapable of parking  
above would have to in order to attend

- ii) Perceived expectation was accurate but not absolute
- c. Risk: perceived expectations that are not accurate and are not clarified can lead to avoidance response, unnecessary emotional burdens, and diminished joy

### C. Expectations and the Parable

1. For the graduates and the rest of us: **Three Expectations Illustrated in the Parable of the Prodigal Son**
2. The Role and Point of the Parable in the Teaching of Jesus
  - a. The Role:
    - (1) Response to Pharisees objection the social quality of the company Jesus kept
    - (2) Jesus' revelation of the Father's heart in committing to reveal His glory by going to great lengths to find and win the lost back to Himself
      - (a) The lost sheep
      - (b) The lost coin
      - (c) The lost son
  - b. The Point
    - (1) God actively pursues people lost in sin in order to bring them back into fellowship with Himself
    - (2) All the people of God, in whom God's love dwells by the Holy Spirit, ought to share God's heart and love for the lost
      - (a) The difference between the Father's response to the lost son and the elder brother's response to the lost son is the point of the parable
      - (b) As the elder brother should have shared the Father's heart for his younger brother
        - i) so should the fully integrated body of Christ, the church, you and me, share God's love for lost people today,
        - ii) and actively seek their return to Him.
3. Once you know Jesus's point in the parable, the parable can provide application in some other areas of life.

## II. Three Expectations from the Parable of the Prodigal

### A. Expectation #1: There will come a time when you will want to find your own way in life on your own terms and it will likely cost us.

1. **Luke 15:12 (ESV) *And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them.***
  - a. Healthy Path to Personal Maturity: Substantial independence
    - (1) Baby birds leave the nest
    - (2) Yearling deer leave their mothers
    - (3) Adult children leave their homes to establish homes of their own
  - b. But, genuine launching may not go as planned
    - (1) Culturally inappropriate request for inheritance
    - (2) Father's love is hurt but not destroyed

2. Expectation: You will endeavor to find your own way into your own definition of yourself and your life on your terms.
  - a. We expect you will have unique experiences that challenge your personal growth and development
  - b. But, we also realize the world into which you so eagerly set out to explore is not always kind or helpful or morally supportive
    - (1) Pre-law and Psychology
    - (2) Jesus said to His disciples when He once sent them out into ministry, "I am sending you as sheep among wolves."
    - (3) While we are excited for you, our excitement for your future is colored with concern for your hearts.
    - (4) The cost we bear for your independence is loss and concern and love and great hope

**B. Expectation #2: There will likely be a moment in your life, at some point, where you screw up royally and it will probably cost you.**

1. **Luke 15:13-19 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> *Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.* <sup>14</sup> *And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.* <sup>15</sup> *So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.* <sup>16</sup> *And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.* <sup>17</sup> *“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’* <sup>18</sup> *I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.* <sup>19</sup> *I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”*
  - a. We set this as an expectation because we have all been here.
    - (1) All set out to be healthy, independent, self-directing persons in the world only to hit the wall in some area or another
    - (2) We have all set out thinking, it won't happen to us, and inevitably, life does happen to us.
  - b. Many of us have approached life with idea that we can use inherently flawed methods and get it right where others have failed.
    - (1) Bernie Sanders:
      - (a) Russia and Venezuela cannot be evaluated as final examples of failed socialism
      - (b) America can do it and get it right even though every other historical experiment has cost the lives of millions and failed
    - (2) Insanity: Do the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.
2. Here's what we've learned:
  - a. None of us is perfect
    - (1) None of us gets through life without mistakes and failures
    - (2) None of us gets life right 100% of the time
  - b. **There is a difference between expecting someone to fail and expecting someone to experience failure.**
    - (1) Graduates are bright and capable with lofty aspirations and

expectations

(2) We don't expect you to fail, but we do expect that some situations at some point will overwhelm your experience and knowledge and hand you a serving of disappointment and humility.

c. We expect that at some point your expectations of yourselves will be painfully unmet.

**C. Expectation #3: No matter how far you wander, when you decide to come home, the Father will be overjoyed with your return and embrace you with loving, welcoming arms.**

1. **Luke 15:20 (ESV) *And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.***

a. Humility can be a gift that turns us in the right direction

(1) Can turn us to the Father and forgiveness

(2) Can turn us to paths that lead to the Father's blessing

(a) World says, "Suck it up, buttercup!"

(b) Jesus says, "***Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest.***"

b. God's love for you is clearly and eternally demonstrated in the death of Jesus on the cross on your behalf.

2. Only you and God know where your heart and affections lie at the moment as you head out into the world.

a. It feels a lot like throwing Daniel among the lions.

b. **Commit to Him now, but if not, know that He will always receive those who come to Him in faith.**

**III. Final Expectation**

**A. God expects that the fully integrated body of Christ will share with Him His love for all He loves.**

1. Notice the interchange between the Father and the elder brother

a. **Luke 15:28-32 (ESV) <sup>28</sup> *But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!'* <sup>31</sup> *And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'*"**

2. God loves

a. God love His glory and loves to manifest His glory in His body in the world

b. God loves people whom He created to bear His image in the world

**B. Of all the possible approaches and expectations in the world, let this be true of us: that you may expect of any of us and all of us, love.**