

Mosaic Teaching Guide

Teaching Series: *The Parable of the Father with Two Sons*

Teaching Three: *The Elder Son*

Luke 15.25-32

“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

Question: To celebrate your birthday would you rather have a large party with lots of friends, or a small, quiet family celebration?

Parties Can be Irritating

I know how irritating parties can be for those who aren't at the party, even if you're invited.

The Parable of the Father with Two Sons

The son parties away his inheritance and the father watches and waits.

The Context

It is the story of three characters whose narrative is meant to reveal the nature of the God that Jesus knows.

The Pharisees

Up to this point in the story, the Pharisees didn't see themselves in the story.

The Elder Son

He doesn't want to go to the party. Would you?

The Angry Son

The good son will enter a self-imposed exile of bitterness and anger.

God is not Fair

The angry son was living his life based on the presumption that his faithfulness had garnered him most favored son status.

You Can't be a Son without being a Brother

"The position of the Pharisees and scribes who grumbled because of Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners has been unmasked as the self-serving indignation of the elder brother who denied his relationship both to his father and to his brother by his refusal to join in the celebration.

In the world of the parable, one cannot be a son without being a brother"

(R. Alan Culpepper).

Would You have Attended the Party?

"We might even ponder whether, had we lived next door, if we would have attended that party" (Fred Craddock).

Grace is Such a Scandalous Category

It seems to me that the father is being foolish.

The Non-Coercive Power of Love

In other words God, for sake of love, is willing to take that chance that many of his beloved creation will become complete and utter jerks in every possible way.

The Ecclesiology of the Story

So what kind of church might reflect this kind of God?

Grace to the Pharisee

The God of Jesus is gracious to people we don't like. In this story nobody gets what they deserve.