**Coming Home to the Father**

**The Word**

Read together Luke 15:11-32

**The Big Idea**

These two brothers represent two impulses of the human heart: either to run from God and seek control through freedom, or to stay home and work for God and pursue control through morality. But in the gospel, God invites us to let go of our attempts to control our lives and to find our rest in the His love and grace for his children.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Which of the two brothers do you tend to relate to most and why?

2. On Sunday we talked about the younger son’s pursuit of unbridled freedom, and we talked about the ache our culture is beginning to feel because of its experiment with freedom. What in that discussion was most helpful or impactful for you? And where can you personally relate to the ache that is created by your own pursuit of freedom?

3. We also talked about the older brother’s pursuit of a moral, responsible life. We talked about the yoke that is felt when someone pursues religious moralism, including the following: weariness from always trying to perform, lack of intimacy and joy with God, resentment when things go wrong, and judgmentalism on other people who don’t measure up. What was impactful for you as you considered the older brother, and where can you relate to the ache that comes with that kind of life?

4. Tim Keller argues that the gospel is a third way: not the way of irreligion or religion. What would living in the gospel look like for you at this time in your life? What would it look like to come home to God’s and be at home in his love at this time?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

A. Tim Keller: these two brothers embody two impulses of the human heart

1. The Irreligious impulse: run from God, break his rules, and pursue freedom

2. The Religious impulse: stay at home, follow all the rules, and pursue responsible morality

3. But the gospel is a third way: being at home in God’s grace and love

B. Jesus’ invitation to “come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”

1. Both brothers experienced a heavy burden and needed rest

2. We too may be experiencing burdens and need to find rest in the Father

II. The Younger Son

A. His decision (v. 12-13)

1. Somehow he is totally disconnected from the love, generosity, and abundance he has in his father’s home. He’s not interested in a relationship with his dad.

2. He wants his freedom: out from under his father’s rules to set his own course

3. This is the “irreligious impulse” of the human heart

a. Adam and Eve: disconnected from God’s love and generosity, simply wanted the freedom to choose for themselves what was good and evil.

b. Our culture today is pursuing unbridled freedom (financially, sexually, geographically, relationally, etc.)

B. His yoke (v. 14-16)

1. He learns that freedom can come with a heavy yoke.

2. He becomes enslaved by his freedom

3. Adam and Eve quickly felt the yoke of their “freedom” (= a shameful experience of their nakedness)

4. Our American culture is beginning to feel the ache of its “freedom”

a. = $ debt, sexual addiction and confusion, loneliness, lack of purpose

b. Mark Sayers: Fulfillment in life comes as a three-legged stool: freedom, meaning, and community. If you pursue rampant freedom, you can’t have the other two because they work against each other. The millennial generation is experiencing increased anxiety, depression, loneliness, isolation as a result of the culture’s message of freedom.

5. Rock bottom = realizing that sin isn’t just bad, it’s dumb

a. He comes to his senses and stops fighting reality

b. Realizing God’s rules aren’t arbitrary but are there for our flourishing

C. Where are you feeling the yoke of your own “freedom?”

III. The Older Son

A. On the outside, he looked much better than his brother, but on the inside he was equally lost.

B. His conversation with his father (v. 28-30)

1. He experiences himself as “slaving away” for his father and trying so hard to work and be good enough for his father

2. He has a profound sense of his own obedience, responsibility, & moral duty

3. But in his attempt to serve and obey his dad, he doesn’t actually love his dad, and he doesn’t actually know his dad’s love for him. He’s so busy working for his dad, he hasn’t learned to simply enjoy his dad

4. All these years he’s been living like a servant when in fact he’s a son!

C. His Father’s response (v. 31)

1. “My son” = you’re not a servant, you’re a son

2. “You are always with me” = I just want to be with you. That’s what’s important to me.

3. “All that I have is yours.” This has always been yours, not because you have to earn it and work for it, but simply because you’re my son.

D. He represents the religious impulse

1. Adam and Eve tried to cover their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together

2. Likewise, we try to cover our sense of inadequacy through our obedience and responsible, moral behavior

3. But this is actually just another attempt to avoid our need for God. It’s our attempt to try to control the situation rather than letting God solve our problem for us.

E. There is a heavy yoke that comes with this

1. Weary: always trying to perform, always having to be good to feel accepted

2. Lack of intimacy and joy with God. We’re doing all the right religious things, but we don’t have a close intimate relationship with our Father

3. Resentment when life doesn’t go our way because we think we’ve earned it and we think God owes us a good life

4. Self-righteousness and judgmentalism on others who aren’t working as hard as we are.

IV. The Gospel

A. These two brothers have the same issue deep down inside

1. They’ve kept themselves at the center: their need to control their lives (by breaking all the rules or trying to keep all the rules)

2. They are missing the Father himself: a deep and abiding relationship with him and an experience of his grace and abundance

B. The gospel is a third way

1. It’s not about you: what you’ve done or haven’t done

2. It’s about God: his love for his kids. He is a God who seeks out his lost kids and brings them home by his grace

3. Adam and Eve: God provides animals skins as clothes for them

a. Perhaps the first animal sacrifice in the Bible

b. Likewise, God sends his son to be a sacrifice so that he can clothe us in the righteousness of his Son Jesus, so that we can be children of God