

A Tale of Two Brothers  
Preacher: Rev. Lauren Lorincz  
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"A Tale of Two Brothers" Pilgrim Church UCC, Fourth Sunday in Lent (Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32)  
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Our Families Shape Us (for better or worse)

-What character do you relate to most? The Prodigal, the Older Brother, or the Father?

-Dr. Walter Toman researched sibling positions and how it affects peoples' personalities knowing that the sibling positions of one's parents also shapes us!

-Oldest Brother of Brothers: assumes responsibility easily, natural leader, nurturing/caring of the group though expects loyalty and trust in return, could become bossy

-Youngest Brother of Brothers: more of a follower, obstinate/daring/bold/complaining/kind-hearted, not interested in achievement as much as the joys of the moment[1]

-The Prodigal and His Brother embody many traits common to their sibling positions.

-We grow up interacting with our siblings and learn how to relate to other people through that relationship. Family Systems teaches that changing patterned reactions with siblings sets the stage for change in all other significant relationships in our lives.

-We tend to focus on the Prodigal Son and His Father. What about the Younger Brother and the Older Brother dynamic?

Younger Brother

-Asks for inheritance early, could have been interpreted that he wanted his father to die

-Heartless rejection of home--do we sometimes prefer the distant country to the home close by?

-We are the Prodigal every time we search for unconditional love where it can't be found

-Makes the decision to come home, receiving God's forgiveness is hard (perhaps it's easier to stay with the sin we know than the freedom we don't know?)

Older Brother

-Outwardly faultless but resentment and jealousy boils to the surface

- "This son of yours" not "This brother of mine" (distancing device from brother and father)

-Judgmental of his family and perhaps lacks joy--deadly serious?

-Doesn't seem to have a happy ending, question becomes do we trust God's all-forgiving love or not?

-Resentment and gratitude can't coexist--he must accept that all life is a pure gift[2]

How do we live this out?

-Only Luke tells the story of the lost son and the loving father. The father runs out to greet the prodigal, contrary to social expectations, and calls for a feast of celebration (fatted calf, festive clothing, open invitation)

-The father tells his older son that we had to celebrate--obligation to be compassionate!

-However we most easily identify (prodigal, older brother, or father) or whoever we happen to be in our families, the call to compassion remains.

-The question of being compassionate in the face of real difference is as hard these days as ever. Soul searching as a nation--who do we want to be?

-Remember, when the going gets rough, turn to wonder

-Hearing other peoples' stories and life experiences helps us to be compassionate

-Life is a pure gift and gratitude remains a powerful response to God's abundant compassion.

[1] Roberta M. Gilbert, M.D., *Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking about Human Interactions*, 199.

[2] Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*.