**8/9 “Pardon Me! Please!”**

**Luke 15:1-32**

**Goal:** To encourage worshippers to accept justifying grace.

Justification and salvation mean the same thing. By repenting and receiving God’s grace, we are received into the family of God now, and forever.

**Music Focus:** Salvation, Justification, Pardon

### Pardon Me Please! Sermon Title Slide Up During The Scripture Reading

### Luke 15:1-32

### The Parable of the Lost Sheep

**15**Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. **2**And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

**3**So he told them this parable: **4**“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? **5**When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. **6**And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ **7**Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

### The Parable of the Lost Coin

**8**“Or what woman having ten silver coins,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25589a)] if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? **9**When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ **10**Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

### The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

**11**Then Jesus[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25592b)] said, “There was a man who had two sons. **12**The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. **13**A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. **14**When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. **15**So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. **16**He would gladly have filled himself with[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25597c)] the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. **17**But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! **18**I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; **19**I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ **20**So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. **21**Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25602d)]**22**But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23**And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; **24**for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

**25**“Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. **26**He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. **27**He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ **28**Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. **29**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. **30**But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ **31**Then the father[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+15&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25612e)] said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. **32**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.’”

1. Intro: Confirmation Class/ Porch House

Wouldn’t you like to feel totally free?

Justification can do that for you—in your head and in your heart.

In the sixth grade, I participated in Confirmation Class at the church I grew up in. We met on Sunday afternoons, at 2pm. About 20 of us (half boys/ half girls) met with our favorite Sunday School teacher, a dear soul named “Art”. On Sunday afternoons, we dutifully worked through “The United Methodist Confirmation Manual for Boys and Girls”.

We took exception the section about sin being universal and the need we have to repent. We’re good kids, after all. So, we took our complaints to Art. Art, who knew a whole lot more about sin and grace, than we did, just smiled.

Then came the big Confirmation retreat! Our group of 20 blended into a group of 120 for a two night District event, held in a dark old downtown church.

On Friday night, we packed into the basement Fellowship Hall, playing a game in which kid were jumping over a rope that was being swung around the room. It was fun, trying to hurdle the rope and watching one another stumble, but then word spread to my posse of about 10 boys, that some beautiful young women, a little older than we were, had suddenly appeared in the church sanctuary.

* Given the choice between jumping rope in the church basement or checking out pretty girls, we consider this to be a no brainer!
* We snuck out the back door of the Fellowship Hall, and crept through that old building, until we reached the balcony of the sanctuary.
* We thought that would be the perfect place to see what was going on.
* Maybe you have figured out—we had crashed a wedding rehearsal!
* Management—including the counselors, pastors -- came down pretty hard on us for that one I recall.
* Our parents were called.
* My Mom’s reaction was, “Separately, those boys are pretty dumb. Together they are dumber.”
* There is a lot more to this story, and I’ll share it in my sermon on August 30th.
* But for now, the important part is that…

On the second night of that retreat, in a candle lit service, when we were asked to give our hearts to the Lord, we no longer objected to the universality of sin. The previous evening had humbled us. We needed to repent.

The Good News that we had been forgiven, was very real to us. We were grateful for forgiveness and new life. Tears of sorrow, and laughter of joy. Freedom!

(Porch Picture)

If you worshipped with us last week, you’ll recall John Wesley’s metaphor of “the house of religion.” “Repentance” is the porch. There is no other way to enter the house. We cannot come through a window, or the back door to receive “justification.”

* If you grew up Baptist, or independent Christian, you heard the word “saved” a lot.
* The word “justification” actually appears more frequently in the Bible.
* Justification is something **done for us** by God, when we turn to Him.
* God welcomes us from the porch, into the house, now and forever-- In spite of our mistakes, sins, and flaws.

(pyramid picture)

**II.** We’re on a journey together and what a ride it has been!

* We’re on the 4th Sunday in an 8 part series.
* We’re talking about that Methodists belief we have, that we’re called to grow in faith.
* We began with the Biblical idea that while Sin is Original, God’s grace was also present in Jesus from the beginning.
* Grace is always one step ahead of us, prompting us to grow.
* How wonderful is it that grace makes us want to grow in faith?
* And how much more wonderful is it, that God has given us this amazing gift of justification?

(add the block to the chancel area visual if available)

III. Mathew 15 explains this incredible gift, through three stories.

1. Lost Sheep— That sheep wanders off. What was that silly animal thinking?
2. Lost Coin – That forgetful housekeeper! How could she lose something so valuable?
3. The Lost Son – Extreme teenage rebellion.

Three stories of lostness-- Lost, Lost, and Lost again…

The unexpected part is that everything/ everyone lost is also found.

* If that doesn’t shock us, it should…
* The stories we humans tell are about punishment and consequences, getting what we deserve. We tell the stories of:
  + Little Red Riding Hood – In the original, she is disobedient to her mother and it doesn’t end well for her.
  + The Three Little Pigs – Two of the three fail to adhere to building codes…and become homeless.
  + You see, in the stories we tell, people get what they deserve.
* Jesus’ stories in Luke 15 don’t fit the “cautionary tale genre”.
* They tell us that even when we wander off, aren’t paying attention to valuable things, or rebel, God still offers us a way home.
* They are “justification” stories.

**IV. The third story, that of the lost son(s), is the most painful of them all!**

* Both sons are actually lost. Sin is universal.
* **The younger son**, like Adam and Eve in the Garden, trusted in his own wisdom, losing everything.
* **The older son** was full blown passive-aggressive-- He loved and served his father, but still resented him. He lost sight of his Father’s love for Him.
* **Do you see now that sin is universal? Do you see now how they were both alienated?**

**WE KNOW HOW THE STORY ENDS**

* Eventually, the younger brother *woke up, gave up, and surrendered up, to God’s free gift, of the father’s love. He recognized he could not rescue himself. He turned toward God.*
* **That’s the repentance moment!**
* His father responded by putting a new robe on him, a ring on his finger and then welcomes him back into the house.
* The younger son is reborn, is open to new possibilities as a son of the Heavenly Father.
* **But grace can be rejected too.** The older brother can’t see what is being offered to him…he shuns the celebration, shuns repentance, and misses out on new life in his father’s house.
* **The only impediment to grace is us, our unwillingness to get off the porch!**

**V. We all carry liabilities—baggage, things that try to get in our way.**

* Imagine a balance sheet.
* On one side, there are liabilities—our debts, the sins that separate us from God.
* On the other, there are assets— these are our good works.
* Good works alone never satisfy our sin.
* Our liabilities exceed our assets.
* We’re in trouble. We’re separated from God!
* But through grace, we turn…

God’s grace is imputed and imparted to the asset side of our balance sheet.

* **Imputed** is a “legal term” —meaning being given a credit for something that doesn’t really belong to us. In our case, Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us. Though we aren’t righteous on our own, He is. His righteousness is added to the asset side of our balance sheet.
* **Imparted** is a spiritual term. It means that the qualities of Jesus’ character (His love, goodness, and concern for the world) are infused into ours.
  + - So maybe you’re already beginning to see that we’re not the only ones who benefit from the gift of salvation/ justification.
    - The inward, turns outward.
    - And while, the gift is ours forever, the journey isn’t over.

**VI. But Justification is so much more than what happens in or heads…it’s what happens in our hearts…**

* It’s the heart of a refugee who has escaped persecution…and is relieved that he can survive in a new country.
* It’s the heart of a prisoner, who after years of jail, is finally set free.
* It’s the heart of a debtor, whose debts are forgiven!

Joe Pennel…was our bishop in Virginia for many years. He told us a story at Annual Conference that I’ll never forget.

He grew up in Tennessee in a small town, on the wrong side of the railroad tracks. The people living there called it “pinch”, because everyone was always in a “pinch”, financially speaking.

Pennel thought he would never have the money to go to college, but during his senior year, his Pastor encouraged him to apply to a United Methodist school. One day, he was surprised to learn that not only had he gotten in, but that he would receive a full scholarship.

He recognized this was an amazing opportunity to learn and grow. It was a way for him to experience a world that he thought he would only be able to dream about.

With his tuition covered, he still had to work afternoons and weekends, bagging groceries at a Piggly Wiggly, in order to earn money to pay for books and new clothes for school.

And he had another problem. A baseball accident, had left him with a partially broken tooth in the front of his mouth. He needed to have it repaired, prior to entering school, because whenever he smiled, he was ashamed. It It took several visits to his local dentist to complete the restoration.

After the final visit, he passed by the receptionists, where she presented him with an envelope that contained the bill. Pennel said his hands were trembling as he opened the seal, and his eyes immediately dropped to the “balance owed” at the bottom of the page.

A wave of panic came over him. In that instant, his dreams of going to college in the fall, seemed to have been crushed. He knew there was no way he could ever bag enough groceries to pay that bill.

Only then did he notice, a hand-written note, its blue ink contrasting the bill’s black ink.

Across the bill, his dentist had written, “Debt Forgiven!”

“Study hard this fall in school!”

Don’t we all want to feel like that?

Consider the possibility that God is reaching out to us this morning, so that we can?

Would you please pray with me?

For some of us today, justification is as comfortable for us as a pair of worn shoes. We’ve given our lives to Christ already, years ago perhaps. For us, today is time to remember and give thanks, a time for us to think about how God is calling us to continue to grow.

For others of us, however, this is new news. If so, today is a wonderful day to turn to Him.

If you believe these words, I invite you to pray them.

**Admit**

We read in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”.

We admit we are sinners. We do things that alienate us from You. Forgive us Lord.

**Believe**

In spite of our imperfection, we believe in you Jesus. You are God’s Son. Through Your death on the cross, You have paid the price for our sin. You have “made a way” for us.

**Confess**

Romans 10:9-10 states, “For it is with your heart that you believe and are *justified*, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are *saved*”.

We confess you as our Savior, Lord Christ.

You promise us new life in this life, and life eternally with you.

We thank you for this gift that the world cannot give us, nor ever take away. Amen.