

Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, which is slightly blurred. The background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text 'Call to Worship' and 'Psalm 1' is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, bold, black font.

Call to Worship

Psalm 1

Psalm 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Wonderful Words of Life

Hymn 29



What A Day that Will Be

Hymn 314





Praise and Prayer Request

Philippians 1:3-6 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Receiving of the Offering



2 Cor. 9:5 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready **as a willing gift**, not as an exaction.

Famous Quote:

“Receive every inward and outward trouble, every disappointment, pain, uneasiness, temptation, darkness and desolation with both hands, as to a true opportunity and blessed occasion of dying to self and entering into a fuller fellowship with thy self-denying, suffering Savior.”

JOHN WESLEY

An open book is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with small, dense text, likely a Bible. The book is set against a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

Today's Message

“The Brother”

Scripture text: Luke 15:11-32

At this point in the parable, the scribes and Pharisees felt confident that they had escaped our Lord's judgment, for He had centered His attention on the publicans and sinners, pictured by the prodigal son. But Jesus continued the story and **introduced the elder brother**, who is a clear illustration of the scribes and Pharisees. The publicans and sinners were guilty of the **obvious sins of the flesh**, but the Pharisees and scribes were guilty of **sins of the spirit** (2 Cor. 7:1). Their outward actions may have been blameless, **but their inward attitudes were abominable** (see Matt. 23:25–28).

2 Corinthians 6:15-7:1 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them,** says the Lord, **and touch no unclean thing;** then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." Since we have these promises, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit,** bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Matthew 23:25-28 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but **inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.** You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** For you are like whitewashed tombs, which **outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.** So you also **outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**

We must admit that the elder brother had some virtues that are commendable. He worked hard and always obeyed his father. He never brought disgrace either to the home or to the village, and apparently he had enough friends so that he could have planned an enjoyable party (Luke 15:29). He seems like a good solid citizen and, compared to his younger brother, almost a saint.

Luke 15:29 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.

However, important as obedience and diligence are, **they are not the only tests of character.** Jesus taught that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love others (Luke 10:25–28), but the elder brother broke both of these divine commandments. **He did not love God (represented in the story by the father), and he did not love his brother.** The elder brother **would not forgive his brother** who wasted the family inheritance and disgraced the family name. But **neither would he forgive his father** who had graciously forgiven the young man those very sins!

Luke 10:25-28 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "**What is written in the Law? How do you read it?**" And he answered, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.**" And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

Is it our desire, to see people come into a relationship with Jesus Christ, to be healed, forgiven, restored, and part of the Body of Christ?
No matter the background?

When you examine the sins of the elder brother, you can easily understand why he pictures the scribes and Pharisees. To begin with, he was self-righteous. **He openly announced the sins of his brother, but he could not see his own sins.** The Pharisees defined sin primarily in terms of outward actions, **not inward attitudes.** They completely missed the message of the Sermon on the Mount and its emphasis on inward attitudes **and holiness of heart** (Matt. 5–7).

Luke 18:10-14 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a **Pharisee and the other a tax collector.**

The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.**' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, '**God, be merciful to me, a sinner!**' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. **For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."**

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, **did we** not prophesy **in your name**, and cast out demons **in your name**, and do many mighty works **in your name?**' And then will I declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**'

Who are we trying to glorify, ourselves, or the Lord Jesus Christ? I will tell you, it is never about us, only about Him, the one who died, that we might live!

Pride was another one of his failings. **Just think, he had served his father all those years and had never disobeyed his will!** What a testimony! **But his heart was not in his work, and he was always dreaming of throwing a big party at which he and his friends could enjoy themselves.** He was only a drudge. Like the Prophet Jonah, the elder brother did God's will but not from the heart. He was a hard worker and a faithful worker—qualities to be commended—but **his work was not a “labor of love” that would please his father.**

Ephesians 6:5-8 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, **with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,** rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, **knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord,** whether he is a slave or free.

The elder brother was only giving eye-service to his father, yet his heart was far from him!

Jonah 3:10 -4:3 When God saw what they did, **how they turned from their evil way**, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and **he did not do it. But it displeased Jonah exceedingly**, and **he was angry**. And he prayed to the LORD and said, "**O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country?** That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."

You cannot help but **notice his unconcern for his missing brother**. Imagine **having to be told that his brother had come home!** The father watched for the younger son day after day and finally saw him afar off, but the **elder brother did not know his brother was home until one of the servants told him.**

Even though he knew it would make his father happy, the **elder brother did not want his younger brother to come home**. Why should he share his estate with somebody who had wasted his own inheritance? Why should he even share the father's love with somebody who had brought shame to the family and the village?

Reports of the prodigal's lifestyle only made the elder brother look good, and **perhaps this would make the father love his obedient son even more.** No doubt about it—the arrival of the younger son was a threat to the older son.

Perhaps the most disturbing thing about the elder son was **his fierce anger.** He **was angry at both his father and his brother** and would not go into the house and **share in the joyful celebration.**

Anger is a normal emotion and it need not be sinful. **“Be ye angry, and sin not”** (Eph. 4:26, quoting Ps. 4:4). Moses, David, the prophets, and our Lord Jesus displayed holy anger at sin, and so should we today. The Puritan preacher Thomas Fuller said that anger was one of the “sinews of the soul.” Aristotle gave good advice when he wrote: “Anybody can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose and in the right way—**that is not within everybody’s power and is not easy.**”

The elder brother was angry with his father because his father had given the younger son the feast that the elder brother **had always wanted**. “You never gave me so much as a goat,” he said to his father, “but you killed for him the valuable fatted calf!” The elder brother’s dreams were all shattered because the father **had forgiven the prodigal**.

Of course the elder brother was angry at his younger brother **for getting all that attention and receiving the father’s special gifts**. As far as the elder brother was concerned, the **younger brother deserved none of it**. Had he been faithful? No! Had he obeyed the father? No! Then why should he be treated with such kindness and love?

The Pharisees had a religion of good works. By their fasting, studying, praying, and giving, they hoped to earn blessings from God and merit eternal life. They knew little or nothing about the grace of God. However, it was not what they did, but what they did not do, that alienated them from God. When they saw Jesus receiving and forgiving irreligious people, they rebelled against it. Even more, they failed to see that they themselves also needed the Savior.

Matthew 23:23-24 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have **neglected the weightier matters of the law:** justice and mercy and faithfulness. **These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.** You blind guides, **straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!**

Are we guilty of being a Pharisee?

The same father who ran to meet the prodigal came out of the house of feasting to plead with the older son. How gracious and condescending our Father is, and **how patient He is with our weaknesses!** The father explained that he would have been willing to host a feast for the older boy and his friends, but **the boy had never asked him.** Furthermore, ever since the division of the estate, **the elder brother owned everything,** and he could use it as he pleased.

Softly and Tenderly

Hymn 432

