

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 102 – April 12th – Luke 15:1-32

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Luke

Geldenhuys, Norval	<i>Commentary on the Gospel of Luke</i> , Marshall Morgan and Scott, London, 1950
Marshall, I Howard	<i>The Gospel of Luke</i> , The New International Greek Testament Commentary, Paternoster, Exeter, 1978
Morris, Leon	<i>Luke</i> (Tyndale NT Commentaries), IVP, London 1974

Chapter 15

"There can be no doubt that ch. 15 forms one self-contained and artistically constructed unit with a single theme. The theme is announced at the outset: Jesus is criticised for welcoming sinners and having fellowship with them, and he gives parabolic teaching to justify his attitude." Marshall

Luke 15:1

ἦσαν δὲ αὐτῷ ἐγγίζοντες πάντες οἱ τελῶναί καὶ οἱ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἀκούειν αὐτοῦ.

ἐγγίζω approach, draw near

"The periphrastic form ἦσαν ... ἐγγίζοντες is perhaps meant to indicate that the general circumstances of Jesus' ministry rather than one particular incident are in mind." Marshall

τελωνης, ου m tax collector
ἁμαρτωλος, ου sinful, sinner

Verse 2

καὶ διεγόγγυζον οἱ τε Φαρισαῖοι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς λέγοντες ὅτι Οὗτος ἁμαρτωλοὺς προσδέχεται καὶ συνεσθίει αὐτοῖς.

διαγογγυζω complain, grumble

Cf. 5:30 and the note on 5:29 regarding the importance of meal scenes in Luke.

τε enclitic particle and, and so; τε και and also

γραμματευσ, εως m scribe, expert in Jewish law

οὗτος here is strongly derisory

προσδεχομαι receive, welcome, accept
συνεσθιω eat with

Verse 3

εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτοὺς τὴν παραβολὴν ταύτην λέγων·

The singular παραβολή may be used for a parabolic discourse (cf. 5:36).

Verse 4

Τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν ἔχων ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ ἀπολέσας ἐξ αὐτῶν ἓν οὐ καταλείπει τὰ ἐνεήκοντα ἐννέα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ πορεύεται ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπολωλὸς ἕως εὔρη αὐτό;

The ἄνθρωπος may form a deliberate contrast with γυνή in v.8.

ἑκατον one hundred

A fairly normal size of flock for a small farmer.

προβατον, ου n sheep
ἀπολέσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s
ἀπολλυμι destroy, lose
εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἐνος, μιας, ἐνος one
καταλειπω leave, leave behind
ἐνεήκοντα ninety
ἐννέα nine
ἐρημος, ου f deserted place, uninhabited region

"It is obviously presupposed that the sheep are left in the care of a helper (cf. Jn 10:3)." Marshall

ἀπολωλὸς Verb, perf act ptc, n nom/acc s
ἀπολλυμι

εὔρη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s εὔρισκω

"The parable takes up the theme of God's care for his flock (Ezek 34:12, 23f.) which is now fulfilled in the Messiah." Marshall

Verse 5

καὶ εὐρὸν ἐπιτίθησιν ἐπὶ τοὺς ὄμους αὐτοῦ χαίρων,

ἐπιτιθημι place on, place
ὄμος, ου m shoulder

Here and in Mt 23:4. Cf. Is 40:11

χαίρω rejoice, be glad

Verse 6

καὶ ἔλθὼν εἰς τὸν οἶκον συγκαλεῖ τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς γείτονας, λέγων αὐτοῖς· Συγχαρήτε μοι ὅτι εὔρον τὸ πρόβατόν μου τὸ ἀπολωλὸς.

συγκαλεω call together; midd call to oneself

Probably to a feast.

φίλος, ου m and φίλη, ης f friend
 γειτών, ονος m & f neighbour
 συγχαίρω rejoice with, rejoice together
 εὔρον Verb, aor act indic, 1 s & 3 pl εὔρισκω

Verse 7

λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οὕτως χαρὰ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἔσται
 ἐπὶ ἐνὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ μετανοοῦντι ἢ ἐπὶ
 ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα δίκαιοις οἵτινες οὐ χρεῖαν
 ἔχουσιν μετανοίας.

Cf. a differing application in Mt 18:14.

οὕτως adv. formed from οὕτος thus, in this way

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι

οὐρανῷ is a veiled reference to God (cf. Mt 18:14) and probably to the angels (cf. 15:10).

ἁμαρτωλός, ον sinful, sinner
 μετανοεῶ repent, have a change of heart
 ἢ or, than

δίκαιος, α, ον righteous, just

οἵτινες Pronoun, m nom pl ὅστις, ἥτις, ὅτι
 who

χρεία, ας f need, want

μετανοία, ας f repentance, change of heart, change of way

The last phrase is probably ironic, 'people who think that they are righteous and have no need to repent'.

Verse 8

Ἦ τίς γυνὴ δραχμὰς ἔχουσα δέκα, εἰάν
 ἀπολέσῃ δραχμὴν μίαν, οὐχὶ ἅπτει λύχνον καὶ
 σαροῖ τὴν οἰκίαν καὶ ζητεῖ ἐπιμελῶς ἕως οὗ
 εὔρη;

δραχμή, ης f drachma (Greek silver coin
 with approximate value of a denarius – a
 day's wage)

δέκα ten

"The money would appear to represent the woman's savings or dowry." Marshall

ἄπτω light, ignite

λύχνος, ου m lamp

σαροῦ sweep (of a house)

ζητεῶ seek, search for

ἐπιμελῶς adv carefully, thoroughly

εὔρη see v.4

Verse 9

καὶ εὐροῦσα συγκαλεῖ τὰς φίλας καὶ γείτονας
 λέγουσα· Συγχαρήτε μοι ὅτι εὔρον τὴν
 δραχμὴν ἣν ἀπόλεσα.

Compare verse 6

Verse 10

οὕτως, λέγω ὑμῖν, γίνεται χαρὰ ἐνώπιον τῶν
 ἀγγέλων τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ ἐνὶ ἁμαρτωλῷ
 μετανοοῦντι.

Compare verse 7

Verses 11-32

The central figure in the parable is the father, hence Thielicke's famous description 'The parable of the waiting father'.

"What is portrayed in the parable, therefore, is the love of God for his wayward children, a theme already developed in the OT: with reference to Jer 3:22, G. Quell notes how the backsliding Israelites are summoned to return to God as to a Father, and 'in Jer 31:18-20, where the sons of Ephraim are now the son, one may clearly perceive the original of the parable of the prodigal'; cf. Hos 11:1-9; Is 63:15f...

"The elder son represents a religion which relies on its own ability and imposes a claim on the Father, instead of recognising its dependence on the kind of fatherly love shown in ordinary human relations." Marshall.

Stephen Wright (*Tales Jesus Told*) comments,

"But to jump to these identifications too quickly is to miss much of the story and its suggestive power. First and foremost, this is the story of a human family, and all three of the members of the family we see are crucial to the story." Wright goes on to say, "It is very unlikely that anyone who was really listening could have remained neutral. For some, indeed, the response would surely have gone deeper than just taking up a stance of sympathy or hostility to one or other of the characters. It would have entailed *identifying* with them: saying 'that is me'. And in that identification the story might have brought profound joy or sadness, yearning or remorse."

"The setting in which Luke places the story is very plausible and helps us to imagine some of its potential impact on different groups of people. Pharisees and Scribes have been expressing disapproval of Jesus on account of his easy mixing with groups of people considered unclean – the customs officers and 'sinners' (Luke 15:1-2). Along with the pictures of a shepherd searching for his sheep and a woman searching for a lost coin, Jesus tells this story to these leading figures. But others too would be listening in, especially the 'sinners' themselves and Jesus' disciples.

"Jesus invites his hearers to envisage a rebellious son who puts himself outside the pale of family, community and ancestral faith; who flouts God's law and ends up in the most shameful state of uncleanness – in the household of a Gentile, feeding pigs. What would they think of him? For the Pharisees and Scribes, such a person would be the very personification of a reprobate, someone whose company a strict law-abiding Jew would shun. Little sympathy for the son would come from that quarter... Different members of the audience would have reacted differently to the son's decision to return; the Pharisees and Scribes looking cynically at his motives; the customs officials and 'sinners' recognising a familiar pattern of desperation."

Tom Wright (N T Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*) argues that this parable subverts the story Israel was telling of itself and was living out, the story of Exile and Restoration. Jesus subverts the story by asserting that the real return from exile "is taking place, in an extremely paradoxical fashion, in Jesus' own ministry... His welcome to all and sundry ... was a sign that resurrection – forgiveness – restoration – return from exile – the reign of YHWH – were all happening under the noses of the elder brothers, the self-appointed stay-at-home guardians of the father's house. The covenant was being renewed, and Jesus' welcome to the outcasts was a vital part of that renewal... In telling this story, he is explaining and vindicating his own practice of eating with sinners: his celebratory meals are the equivalent, in real life, of the homecoming party in the story. They are the celebration of the return from exile. What is more, Jesus is claiming that, when he does all this, Israel's god is doing it, welcoming sinners no matter whether have passed all the normal tests for membership, as long as they will accept the welcome of Jesus... He is making a claim, a claim to be the one in and through whom Israel's god is restoring his people. The claim is highly controversial." Tom Wright adds that, for Luke, there is a parallel between this parable and the debate within the early church recorded in Acts 15.

Verse 11

Εἶπεν δέ· Ἄνθρωπός τις εἶχεν δύο υἱούς.

εἶχεν Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s ἔχω
 δυο gen & acc δυο dat δυοσιν two

Verse 12

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ νεώτερος αὐτῶν τῷ πατρί· Πάτερ, δός μοι τὸ ἐπιβάλλον μέρος τῆς οὐσίας· ὁ δὲ διείλεν αὐτοῖς τὸν βίον.

νεωτερος, α, ον younger, young, youngest
 (comparitive from νεος)

δος see 14:9

Such a request is unheard of in Ancient Near Eastern literature apart from this parable.

ἐπιβαλλω fall to

μερος, ους n part

ουσια, ας f property, money, wealth

"The OT law prescribed that the first son was entitled to a double share of the property, so that here the younger son might expect one-third on the death of his father; if, however, a disposition was made to take effect earlier, the share would be less, possibly two-ninths." Marshall.

διείλεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διαίρω
 divide, apportion

βιος, ου m living, possessions

"The younger son thereby deprived himself of any further claims on the father's estate, as he himself later recognised (v.19)." Marshall. Kenneth E. Bailey (*Poet and Peasant*) writes, "The prodigal is shown as wishing his father's death in his request for his portion. The father demonstrates almost unbelievable love by granting the request." Bailey also draws attention to the silence of the older brother who also receives his share of the inheritance at this point. The younger brother's leaving and the older brother's silence, letting him go, both signify an unwillingness to live together in the inheritance of their father, a living together idealised in Ps 133:1.

Verse 13

καὶ μετ' οὐ πολλὰς ἡμέρας συναγαγὼν πάντα ὁ νεώτερος υἱὸς ἀπεδήμησεν εἰς χώραν μακράν, καὶ ἐκεῖ διεσκορπίσεν τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ ζῶν ἀσώτως.

The litotes οὐ πολλὸς is Lucan (Acts 1:5).

συναγαγων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s
 συναγω gather, gather together

Marshall says that the meaning here is 'to turn into cash'.

ἀποδημεω leave (home) on a journey, go away

χωρα, ας f country, region, land

μακραν far, far off, at some distance

ἐκει there, in that place, to that place

διασκορπιζω scatter, squander

ζωω live, be alive

ἀσωτως adv. recklessly, immorally

Cf. Eph 5:18; Tit 1:6; 1 Peter 4:4.

Verse 14

δαπανήσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο λιμὸς ἰσχυρὰ κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἐκείνην, καὶ αὐτὸς ἤρξατο ὑστερεῖσθαι.

δαπανήσαντος Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s
δαπαναω spend

λιμος, ου m & f famine, hunger

"Jeremias has traced a series of ten famines in and around Jerusalem from 168 BC to AD 70 (excluding the results from war). Famine would have been a very powerful image for any first-century Palestinian audience." Bailey.

ἰσχυρος, α, ου strong, powerful
ἐκεῖνος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that
ὑστερεω lack, have need of; midd be in want

Verse 15

καὶ πορευθεὶς ἐκολλήθη ἐνὶ τῶν πολιτῶν τῆς χώρας ἐκείνης, καὶ ἔπεμψεν αὐτὸν εἰς τοὺς ἀγροὺς αὐτοῦ βόσκειν χοίρους·

πορευθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s
πορευομαι go

ἐκολλήθη Verb, aor pass dep indic, 3 s
κολλαομαι unite oneself with

A strong verb, 'joined himself to'. "To become an employee or, indeed, the slave – as seems almost to have been the case here – of a Gentile would have been shameful enough for a Jew. To find oneself tending pigs, unclean to Jewish people, was more degrading still." S. Wright.

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one
πολιτης, ου m citizen, fellow-citizen

χωρα, ας f see v.13

ἐκεῖνος, η, ο see v.14

πεμπω send

ἀγρος, ου m field, farm, countryside

βοσκω tend, feed

χοιρος, ου m pig

Feeding pigs was an unclean occupation (Lev 11:7) and thoroughly degrading for a Jew. Bailey suggests that the prodigal may have been given this job in an attempt to get rid of him. Jeremias reasons that the prodigal could not have observed the Sabbath, would have been associated with unclean animals, and thus was "practically forced to renounce the regular practice of his religion."

Verse 16

καὶ ἐπεθύμει γεμίσει τὴν κοιλίαν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν κερατίων ὧν ἤσθιον οἱ χοῖροι, καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου αὐτῷ.

ἐπιθυμew long for, desire, lust after

The imperfect may represent an unfulfilled desire.

χορτασθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin χορταζω
feed, satisfy

"χορτασθῆναι (6:21) is the reading of p⁷⁵ & B D L f1 f13... and was accepted by UBS on the basis of the external evidence... Other MSS have γεμισαι τὴν κοιλίαν ('to fill his stomach'); so A Θ pm lat sy^{sP} bo; TR; (and RSV mg; NEB; JB; TEV; NIV). It is more likely that this strong, almost crude expression was corrected by scribes ..., than that it was later added to the text; here, therefore, the inferior MSS may preserve the correct reading." Marshall.

κερατιον, ου n pod (of the carob tree)
οὐδεις, οὐδεμα, οὐδεν no one, nothing
ἐδίδου Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s διδωμι

Indicates the desertion of his friends. "It is not necessary to assume... that the youth was reduced to stealing: would he not have received some tiny wage for looking after the swine?" Marshall.

Linnemann suggests that the prodigal wanted to eat the carob pods but was unable to do so because someone else was feeding the pigs and would not give him any. Bailey and S. Wright, however, suggest he was forced to eat what were *wild* carob pods which are bitter and could not satisfy his hunger. Wright comments, "From tasting the brief thrills of *nouveau riche* luxury, he descends to tasting the fodder of unclean animals and the bitter pill of poverty. The same words are used of his 'longing to be filled' as are used in another story, that of the beggar Lazarus, who is 'longing to be filled' with crumbs from the rich man's table (Luke 16:21)."

Verse 17

εἰς ἑαυτὸν δὲ ἐλθὼν ἔφη· Πόσοι μίσθιοι τοῦ πατρὸς μου περισσεύονται ἄρτων, ἐγὼ δὲ λιμῶ ὧδε ἀπόλλυμαι·

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

'come to one's senses' – a Semitic phrase meaning 'repent'. Bailey argues that it is only 'repentance' in a weak sense. Stephen Wright comments, "For Judaism, the justice enshrined in the Torah given by God to Israel entailed, centrally, obedience to God, family loyalty and care for all members of the community, including the poorest. In demanding his inheritance, leaving his family and spending his money on himself, this young man had flouted all three principles. He had left the environment where God was worshipped, where he owed a duty to his friends and neighbours, and where he himself would receive support in time of need. Now he was alone and alienated from that safe and sacred space. This was not divine punishment for his folly, simply its self-imposed consequence. And, in a moment of self-awareness, he sees that there is only one course of action he can now take."

ἔφη Verb, imperf act ind, 3s φημι say
 ποσος, η, ον how much(?), how many(?)
 μισθιος, ου m hired man, labourer
 περισσευω abound, excel, have plenty
 ἄρτος, ου m bread, a loaf, food
 λιμος, ου m & f see v.14
 ὧδε adv here, in this place
 ἀπολλυμι mid be lost, perish, die

Verse 18

ἀναστὰς πορεύσομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ ἔρω αὐτῷ· Πάτερ, ἤμαρτον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἐνώπιόν σου,

ἀναστὰς aor. ptc. ἀνίστημι rise, arise

Marshall, following Jeremias, says that ἀναστὰς πορεύσομαι represents an Aramaic phrase meaning 'I will go at once'.

ἔρω Verb, fut act indic, 1 s λεγω
 ἤμαρτον aor. ἁμαρτανω sin, commit sin

εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν means 'against God'.

ἐνώπιον before, in the presence of

Verse 19

οὐκέτι εἰμι ἄξιος κληθῆναι υἱὸς σου· ποίησόν με ὡς ἓνα τῶν μισθίων σου.

οὐκέτι adv no longer, no more
 ἄξιος, α, ον worthy, deserving, fitting
 κληθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin καλεω

He has no claim on his father since he has already received all that he was entitled to.

Bailey follows Derrett in suggesting that the prodigal wanted a measure of independence as a hired servant with a day wage. He may even have hoped that in due course he could pay back what was due to his father. Furthermore, in working as a hired servant he will not be eating his brother's bread and thus does not need to be reconciled to his brother. Perhaps he hopes that by returning to the village as a hired servant his position there will also be secured. He sees repentance in terms of making reparation.

Verse 20

καὶ ἀναστὰς ἦλθεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἑαυτοῦ. ἔτι δὲ αὐτοῦ μακρὰν ἀπέχοντος εἶδεν αὐτὸν ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσπλαγγίσθη καὶ δραμῶν ἐπέπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν.

"His father ... knows how the village (which certainly has told him he should not have granted the inheritance in the first place) will treat the boy on his arrival. The prodigal will be mocked by a crowd that will gather spontaneously as word flashes across the village telling of his return... As soon as the prodigal reaches the edge of the village and is identified, a crowd will begin to gather. He will be subject to taunt songs and many other types of verbal and perhaps even physical abuse.

"The father is fully aware of how his son will be treated, if and when he returns in humiliation to the village community he has rejected. What the father does in this homecoming scene can best be understood as a series of dramatic actions calculated to protect the boy from the hostility of the village and to restore him to fellowship within the community. These actions begin with the father running down the road." Bailey.

ἔτι still, yet

μακρὰν see v.12.

ἀπέχω intrans. be distant

εἶδεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ὄρω trans

see, recognise

ἐσπλαγγίσθη Verb, aor pass dep indic, 3 s

σπλαγγιζομαι be moved with pity or compassion

Expresses the heart of the story.

δραμῶν Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s τρέχω
 run

"An Oriental nobleman with flowing robes never runs anywhere. To do so is humiliating... The text says, 'He had compassion.' We would suggest that this 'compassion' specifically includes awareness of the gauntlet the boy will have to face as he makes his way through the village. The father then runs the gauntlet for him, assuming a humiliating posture in the process!" Bailey. The act of the father in the parable is a reflection of the ministry of the Son.

ἐπέπεσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἐπιπιτω
fall upon

τραχηλος, ου m neck

καταφιλω kiss

Cf. Acts 20:37; Gen 45:14f; 33:4. The father's kiss prevents the son from kissing the hand or even the feet of the father.

"The action is a sign of forgiveness (2 Sa 14:33) and of the restoration of the broken relationship, with the initiative being taken by the father." Marshall. The reconciliation takes place publically, on the edge of the village. John Nolland says, "The language of the father's action here is likely to be based upon that of the classic reconciliation scene between Jacob and Esau (Gen 33:4)."

Verse 21

εἶπεν δὲ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ· Πάτερ, ἡμαρτον εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἐνώπιόν σου, οὐκέτι εἰμι ἄξιος κληθῆναι υἱὸς σου.

Some MSS (x B D 33) complete the son's words rehearsed in vv.18,19, missing the point that his father will not let him finish his prepared speech.

Bailey comments on the missing offer to be a hired servant, "As we have seen, the prodigal comes home with a rabbinic understanding of repentance. He is shattered by his father's demonstration of love in humiliation. In his state of apprehension and fear he would naturally experience this unexpected deliverance as an utterly overwhelming event. Now he knows that he cannot offer any solution to their ongoing relationship. He sees that the point is not the lost money, but rather the broken relationship which he cannot heal. Now he understands that any new relationship must be a pure gift from his father. He can offer no solution. To assume that he can compensate his father with his labour is an insult. 'I am unworthy' is now the only appropriate response."

Verse 22

εἶπεν δὲ ὁ πατὴρ πρὸς τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ· Ταχὺ ἐξενέγκατε στολὴν τὴν πρώτην καὶ ἐνδύσατε αὐτόν, καὶ δότε δακτύλιον εἰς τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑποδήματα εἰς τοὺς πόδας,

δουλος is a household servant as opposed to the μισθος, a hired hand.

ταχυ adv quickly, without delay, soon

ἐξενέγκατε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl

ἐκφέρω carry or bring out, produce

στολη, ης f robe, long robe

πρωτος, η, ον first, foremost

Here meaning 'best' – almost certainly the father's (though it may have been the son's former robe).

ἐνδύω dress, clothe

δότε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl δίδωμι

δακτυλιος, ου m ring (for the finger)

A symbol of authority, especially royal authority (Esth 3:10; 8:8; also 6:6-11 with its focus on 'the man whom [the king] delights to honour').

χειρ, χειρος f hand, power

ὑπόδημα, τος n sandal

πόδας Noun, acc pl τους, ποδος m foot

"The shoes were a sign that a person was a freeman, not a slave; at the same time, they were worn in the house by the master, and not by the guests, who took them off on arrival. Hence they indicated authority and possession as well as freedom." Marshall. All of this not only restores his place in the family but also in the community.

Verse 23

καὶ φέρετε τὸν μόσχον τὸν σιτευτόν, θύσατε, καὶ φαγόντες εὐφρανθῶμεν,

φέρω bring, carry, lead

μοσχος, ου m calf, young bull

σιτευτος, η, ον fatted, fattened

Only here and in vv. 27,30 in NT. "The reference is to an animal specially fed and kept to be slaughtered on a special occasion." Marshall

θύω slaughter, sacrifice, kill

φαγόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m nom pl ἐσθω
and ἐσθω eat

εὐφρανθῶμεν Verb, aor pass subj, 1 pl

εὐφραίνω make glad; pass be glad,
rejoice

Includes an implied invitation to the community.

Verse 24

ὅτι οὗτος ὁ υἱός μου νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἀνέζησεν,
ἦν ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὐρέθη. καὶ ἤρξαντο
εὐφραίνεσθαι.

νεκρός, α, ον dead

ἀναζάω come back to life, come to life

ἀπολωλὼς Verb, perf act ptc, m nom s

ἀπολλυμι destroy, kill, lose

εὐρέθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s εὐρίσκω

ἤρξαντο Verb, aor midd indic, 3 pl ἀρχω
midd begin

εὐφραίνεσθαι Verb, pres pass infin εὐφραίνω

A link with the previous parables (15:4,8).

Verse 25

Ἦν δὲ ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐν ἀγρῶ·
καὶ ὡς ἐρχόμενος ἤγγισεν τῇ οἰκίᾳ, ἤκουσεν
συμφωνίας καὶ χορῶν,

πρεσβύτερος, α, ον elder, eldest, old
man/woman

ἀγρος, ου m field, farm

"The older son appears on the scene in the fields. He is outside the house. His path to the banquet hall is step by step presented as parallel to the road just travelled by the prodigal." Bailey.

ἐγγίζω approach, draw near

συμφωνία, ας f music

χορος, ου m dancing

Verse 26

καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος ἓνα τῶν παίδων
ἐπυνθάνετο τί ἂν εἶη ταῦτα·

προσκαλεσάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m
nom s προσκαλεομαι call to oneself,
summon

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

παις, παιδος m & f servant, slave, child

Bailey suggests that the men/adults of the village were in the feast while the children would have congregated in the courtyard outside. It was of one of these children that the older brother calls for an explanation for the feast – hence the reply 'your father ..' rather than 'my master ...'

πυνθανομαι inquire, ask, question

εἶη 3s. subj. εἶμι

τί ἂν εἶη is a Lucan phrase, cf. 18:36; Acts 21:33.

Verse 27

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὅτι Ὁ ἀδελφός σου ἤκει, καὶ
ἔθυσεν ὁ πατήρ σου τὸν μόσχον τὸν σιτευτόν,
ὅτι ὑγιαίνοντα αὐτὸν ἀπέλαβεν.

ἦκω come, have come, be present

See v.23 for much of the vocabulary of this verse

ὑγιαίνω be sound, be in good health

Here means that the boy is safe and well.

ἀπέλαβεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s

ἀπολαμβανω receive back, get back

Verse 28

ὠργίσθη δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν εἰσελθεῖν. ὁ δὲ
πατήρ αὐτοῦ ἐξελθὼν παρεκάλει αὐτόν.

ὠργίζομαι be furious, be angry

"He objected to the welcome given to one who had done nothing to deserve it, but rather had done harm to his father. Perhaps too he feared some loss to himself as heir to what remained." Marshall.

ἤθελεν Verb, imperf act indic, 3 s θελω
wish

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in

Bailey points out that custom would have required the elder brother's presence. "At such a banquet the older son had a semi-official responsibility. He is expected to move among the guests, offering compliments, making sure everyone has enough to eat, ordering the servants around and, in general, becoming a sort of major-domo of the feast." His failure to go in amounts to a public humiliation of his father.

ἐξελθὼν Verb, aor act ptc, nom m s

ἐξερχομαι

παρακαλεω exhort, encourage, urge

Note the imperfect for continuous action. Bailey comments, "The listener/reader expects anger similar to that of King Ahasuerus to burn within the heart of the father. He is expected to ignore the boy and proceed with the banquet, or in some way punish him for public insolence, or at least demonstrate extreme displeasure. However, for the second time in one day, the father goes down and out of the house offering in public humiliation a demonstration of unexpected love." Stephen Wright comments, "Just as he had gone out to meet his returning younger son, so he goes out to his loyal but reluctant elder son."

Verse 29

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ· Ἴδού
τοσαῦτα ἔτη δουλεύω σοι καὶ οὐδέποτε
ἐντολήν σου παρήλθον, καὶ ἐμοὶ οὐδέποτε
ἔδωκας ἔριπον ἵνα μετὰ τῶν φίλων μου
εὐφρανθῶ·

ἀποκριθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s

ἀποκρινομαι answer, say

The elder son's attitude is reminiscent of that expressed in Mt 20:12.

τοσουτος, αυτη, ουτον correlative adj so much; pl so many

ἔτη Noun, nom & acc pl ἔτος, ους n year δουλευω serve, slave for

Not the kind of word you would expect used by a son of work for his father – except in anger, “I have slaved away for you all these years ...”. The son feels that he has had the position of a slave (cf. Gal 4:1f.).

οὐδεποτε never

ἐντολη, ης f order, instruction

παρερχομαι pass by, neglect

Cf. 11:42. "He reflects the attitude of the Pharisees (18:9ff.; 18:21; Gal 1:13f.; Phil 3:6) as seen by Jesus and the early church... It should be regarded as a 'persuasive definition' rather than a statement with which they could at once identify themselves. Jesus' description is meant to make them re-examine themselves." Marshall. Though note also Deut 26:13 for the language that was to accompany the tithe offering.

Bailey points out that the assertion of the elder brother that he has always obeyed his father does not sit well with his refusal to join in the banquet and his failure to address his father with any form of reverential title – both of which amount to insults. Bailey quotes Sa'id who writes, "The estrangement and rebellion of the older son were evident in his anger and his refusal to enter the house."

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ

Note the emphatic position of ἐμοὶ

ἔδωκας Verb, aor act indic, 3 s δίδωμι

Stephen Wright comments, "This loyal son has not grasped the fact that his father was treating him, too, as grown up, indeed as an equal; that all that was the father's – the house and livestock and land and its produce, all that remained after the younger son had taken his portion – was indeed his. He was still expecting to receive gifts like a child, while all along his father was entrusting him with everything that they had left, and expecting him to enjoy it freely."

ἔριφος, ου m goat, kid

Only here and in Mt 25:32.

φίλος, ου m and φιλη, ης f friend

εὐφρανθῶ Verb, aor pass subj, 1 s εὐφραίνω see v.23

The elder brother now expresses the desire which had typified the prodigal! Cf. the language of the labourers in the parable in Mt 20:11, cf. Lk 17:7-10.

Verse 30

ὅτε δὲ ὁ υἱὸς σου οὗτος ὁ καταφαγὼν σου τὸν βίον μετὰ πορνῶν ἦλθεν, ἔθυσας αὐτῷ τὸν σιτευτὸν μόσχον.

ὅτε conj when, at which time

ὁ υἱὸς σου οὗτος Note: not 'my brother.' By this the elder brother declares that he is not part of the family – he has "removed himself from the fellowship of the family." Bailey.

καταφαγῶν Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

κατεσθίω and κατεσθῶ eat up, devour βίος, ου m living, possessions

σου τὸν βίον Derrett argues that this is an attempt to say, "He doesn't love you. If he did, he would have preserved his portion to take care of you in your old age."

πορνη, ης f prostitute

An assertion made without evidence but on the ground of probability. From the older son it is an attempt to blacken his brother's name.

ἔθυσας αὐτῷ τὸν σιτευτὸν μόσχον see v.23.

Verse 31

ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Τέκνον, σὺ πάντοτε μετ' ἐμοῦ εἶ, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐμὰ σὰ ἐστίν·

"How will the father respond after this attack on his integrity?... If he orders the son to enter the house and fulfil his duty as a member of the family, the son will certainly obey. But what would be gained? He already has a servant in the person of this young man. He wants a 'son.' The father bypasses the omission of a title, the bitterness, the arrogance, the insult, the distortion of fact, and the unjust accusations. There is no judgment, no criticism, no rejection, but only an outpouring of love. In striking contrast to the older son, he begins with a title and an affectionate one at that. Rather than υἱός he now uses τέκνον." Bailey.

τεκνον, ου n child

παντοτε always

ἐμος, η, ου 1st pers possessive adj my, mine

σος, ση, σου possessive adj. your, yours

"The saying must be interpreted to mean that legally the son will inherit the farm, since it has already been promised to him. If the son has not already enjoyed the fruits of it, it is because he has not asked rather than because the father was unwilling to give it." Marshall. These words amount to an assurance that the prodigal's return does not affect the elder brother's rights in any respect.

Verse 32

εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, ὅτι ὁ
ἀδελφός σου οὗτος νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἔζησεν, καὶ
ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὐρέθη.

χαρῆναι Verb, aor pass dep infin χαίρω
rejoice, be glad

ἔδει Verb, imperf indic, 3 s (impers) δεῖ
impersonal verb it is necessary, must

The words are ambiguous: they could explain the father's rejoicing or amount to an appeal for the elder son to join in the rejoicing.

ἀδελφός σου οὗτος note the contrast with v.20. The father's concern is for reconciliation. His words are an appeal to the elder son to understand grace.

"With the father's statement the parable comes to an end, leaving his words as the climax, but also leaving the question for the hearers to answer: will the elder brother go in?" Marshall. The lack of response by the elder son amounts to an appeal to the Pharisees, 'Will *you* go in?'

Luke 15:11-32 Postscript

Bailey comments, "It is certainly right not to make a one-to-one identification of the Pharisees with the older son and the publicans with the younger son. Instead, Jesus is discussing two basic types of men. One is lawless without the law, the other lawless within the law. Both rebel. Both break the father's heart. Both end up in a far country, one physically, the other spiritually. The same unexpected love is demonstrated in humiliation to each. For both this love is crucial if servants are to become sons.

"This last half of the parable clarifies a potential misunderstanding of repentance that could be deduced from the first double parable. Repentance does not quite equal being found. The father goes out and finds both sons. One understands and accepts the status of being found. The other, so far as we know, does not, and remains lost."

Stephen Wright comments that the story is "Of a father striving to reconcile his children: a father for whom people were more important than property; unity more important than dignity; forgiveness more important than family honour; reconciliation more important than national and ritual purity."