

Date: 14 Apr 2024 | Speaker: Ps Ernie Song | Topic: Homecoming | Scripture: Luke 15:11-24

SERMON SUMMARY

Ps Ernie preached from the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is a story to remind us that God's love is freely given and not earned.

a. Scene 1: The Departure (vv. 11 – 13)

- This passage must be read in the context of [Luke 15:1-2](#). The story of the Prodigal son was in the context of Jesus addressing the religious leaders (pharisees) and their relationship with the sinners.
- It is very likely, given the context, that the younger brother was mistreated by the elder brother. This caused the younger brother to have a tough family life (isolation and rejection).
- He had thirst that was not satisfied in the current family state.
- He came to a breaking point where he decided to cut all ties with his family, out of frustration.
- Although the father was sad with the situation (and possibly persuaded him the two brothers to make peace), he obliged because of "freewill". He gave 1/3 of the inheritance to the younger son because in the Jewish culture, the older brother receives a double portion of the inheritance as a mark of respect and affirmation of him as the new head of the house (once the father passes away).
- The inheritance received is in the form of land and belongings.

b. Scene 2: A Famine called Grace (vv. 14 – 16)

- The younger son took a while to convert his inheritance into money before leaving the family home.
- He went to a faraway Gentile country where he lived recklessly (out of frustration); spending everything that he had. This would not have gone down well for the citizens of that country.
- However, a famine soon arrived and he was at a disadvantaged, being the reckless foreigner that everyone knew to be reckless.
- When seen in perspective, the famine can be seen as God's grace, causing the younger son to yearn for home.

c. Scene 3: The Epiphany (vv. 17 – 19)

- The younger son recognizes that all he needs and wants is in his father's house and wanted to return back as a hired hand. A hired hand is different from a slave because slaves stayed in the home, while hired-hands lived elsewhere. The son positioned himself to do so because of a Jewish ceremony called Kezazah where the whole village will cut off all ties with a son that brought dishonour to the father.
- Thus, the younger son knew that there was no way he was ever going to be a part of the family again; not even a slave. He wanting to become a hired-hand was just his way of acknowledging his sin and trying to make up for it by paying back his father.

d. Scene 4: The Homecoming (vv. 20 – 24)

- Having all of these in mind, it is then understandable as to why the father ran to embrace the younger son – he wanted to get there first before the villagers met the younger son and performed the Kezazah ceremony of cutting him off from the family and from the village community.
- The father instead had compassion for the son, ran and embraced him. He also restored back the son's identity through the giving of the signet ring, the robe and the sandals.
- Because of what the father did, the village had no choice but to receive the prodigal son back as part of the family.

Application

This story highlights to us the immense measure of the love of God. Like the prodigal son, we were sinners trying to quench a thirst in our lives. We tried all sorts of ways – love, self-actualisation, climbing the cooperate ladder, money, etc. But that thirst can only be quenched by God’s love. God placed fathers here on this earth because they were meant to reflect who God is to their children. However, many fathers (or parents) are unable to give what they themselves had never received from their parents. As a result, many of us a left hurt and with an un-quenched thirst in our lives – the longing for the love of God.

God desires for us to “come home” and to receive and experience His love for us. He is the source of living water. Like the prodigal son, may we respond by coming home to the Father and allowing us to heal, restore and love us as His children.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Were there times in your life where a famine was actually a provision of God's grace? Share your experience.**

Leader's Notes

This is a relate question for members to think and reflect about times where they were going through difficult situations (either of or not of their own actions) that led them to realise the things that truly matter in eternity, and brought them back to a deeper relationship with God.

Transition

Some moments in our lives are blessings in disguise to draw us back closer to the Father's embrace.

- 2. Share with the cell your relationship with your parents. How has this impacted your relationship with God?**

Leader's Notes

Whether we realise it or not, our relationship with our earthly parents does impact our relationship with our heavenly father. This question is designed to help cell members to see if how they approach God is similar to how they approach their parents.

Transition

These patterns can cause us to approach God in a fearful way or even a way where we unknowingly feel the need to earn God's love.

- 3. Are there any challenges you face(d) that hinder you from embracing your identity as a child of God? Share how you overcame it or how you would like the cell to pray for you.**

Leader's Notes

This question aims for members to share about possible challenges in beliefs, struggles with God or others that may have affected them in seeing themselves as children of God, where love is freely given and not earned. The cell can also break into smaller groups to pray for one another.

Closing

Let us continue to remember how dearly loved we are in God and hold on to His unconditional love for us. As we freely receive, may we continue to be transformed into His likeness.

Consider dividing the group into micro-groups for a deeper time of sharing as well as praying for the following items:

1. Sermon Application

- Pray for all of us to freely receive the Father's love
- Pray for each other, especially those who have been hurt by past relationships and have difficulties receiving the Father's love freely.

2. RiverLife

- Pray for our church, that as we enter into a season of prayer and fasting, that God will align all of our hearts and do what He needs to do so that we can live in a new normal that glorifies Him.

3. World

- Continue to pray for the various nations that are at war:
 - a. Russia and Ukraine
 - b. Myanmar (Civil War) – Pray for the situation where military service was made compulsory for man and woman between the ages of 18 and 35.
 - c. Israel & Hamas
- Continue to pray for countries that have an escalated conflict situation:
 - a. Japan, China and the Philippines in the South China Sea
 - b. North & South Korea
- Continue to pray for countries recovering from recent natural disasters:
 - a. Japan (Earthquake)
 - b. Iceland (Volcanic Eruption)
- Pray for Singapore
 - a. Pray against the rise of young drug abusers
 - b. Pray for a stability in the cost of living in Singapore
- Other Global Issues
 - a. Pray for Sydney as it recovers from a case of multiple stabbings
 - b. Pray for the situation in Thailand where a mass migration of Burmese refugees are seeking to enter the country

4. Opportunities for Outreach

- € Ask the Lord to bless us as we step out to reach a pre-believer.
- € Ask the Lord to grant you opportunities to reach out to a non-believing loved one, friend, or colleague this week as we seek to mature in Christlikeness.

- 1. Found: A Journey In Sonship (New Sermon Series). 14 Apr-26 May.** As disciples of Christ, God calls us His sons and daughters – loved, accepted, and provided for. We sometimes wander from the presence of our Father, choosing to live apart from Him. As we process what God has spoken to us during our recent season of prayer & fasting, we want to respond by returning to the Father's love once again.

Post-Service Sessions (11.30am-1pm in Worship Centre)

a. Sun, 21 Apr Workshop: A Journey in Sonship

This session will help you identify hinderances and beliefs holding you back from receiving the Father's love. You will learn how to receive freedom to fulfil God's plans, purposes and calling for you. *Facilitated by Pastor Thomas Huan & Chen Mee Fang*

b. Sun, 12 May How Can I Hear My Heavenly Father?

Facilitated by Rev Pat Owyang No registration is required for the post-service sessions.

- 2. SuperLife Camp 2024: Wisdom for Living (P1-P6).** Thu-Sat, 30 May-1 Jun. RiverLife Church

- Camp Schedule
 - Thu & Fri, 30 & 31 May | 9am-6pm | Children Only
 - Sat, 1 Jun | 9am-2pm | Children & Parents
- Parents are invited to join us on Sat, 1 Jun.
 - 9am to 12pm: Session with The Treasure Box
 - Parents and their children will hear a special message for families, and work together to create their very own Family Mosaic Coaster.
 - 12pm to 2pm: Lunch Celebration
- Cost
 - 7-21 Apr (Early Bird): \$60 per child (22 Apr onwards: \$70)
 - Additional Costs for Family Session on Sat, 1 Jun: \$15/parent (for lunch); and \$10/family (for family mosaic coaster) or \$4.50/child (for individual mosaic coaster if parents are not coming)
- Registration & More Details: rlc.sg/slcamp2024

- 3. MegaLife Camp 2024. Thu-Sun, 13-16 Jun. Thistle Hotel, Johor Bahru. For Youths Aged 13-18.** If you are a parent of a teen or know someone who's a teen, invite them for our annual Youth camp! Registration opens first week of April and more details will be shared.

- Early Bird (6-15 Apr): \$280
- Regular (16-22 Apr): \$320

- 4. Young Adults Camp 2024 - Commune: As One** (For Young Adults in their 20s). Join us this year at Commune: As One, where we will discover what Jesus meant when he prayed for us to be "One". Let us come together to encounter God's love in the context of family as we build deeper relationships with one another!

- Location: Fri-Sun, 5-7 Jul, Holiday Villa Johor Bahru
- Cost
 - 3 Days 2 Nights: Regular: \$275, Student/NSF: \$225
 - 2 Days 1 Night: Regular: \$210, Student/NSF: \$170
- More Details & Registration: rlc.sg/yacamp2024, Enquiries (Telegram): @YAcommunebot

- 5. RiverLife Filipino 3rd Anniversary Celebration.** Sun, 21 Apr | 11.30am, Grace Chapel (Level 1). Speaker: Pastor Lionel Goh

6. Sustaining the Fire. As our 21-day season of prayer & fasting comes to a close, we thank God for reviving us individually and collectively. It is needful for us to go on walking closely with the Lord and be faithful stewards of the work that has been done in us. We can continue this journey by spending time with God daily using this recommended 21-day devotional:

- 21 Days to Overflow takes readers on a 3-week journey of emptying themselves of self, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and living out an overflowing spirit-filled life. Start 21-day devotional: [On YouVersion Bible App](#) | [PDF](#)

Our Revive Us, Lord website has been updated with resources to help you grow in these four aspects – spiritually, relationally, physically & missionally.

For more information: rlc.sg/21days

7. Alpha Course. 20 Apr – 13 Jul. If you have questions about Christianity that you are seeking answers for, we invite you to join us for Alpha - a series of interactive sessions that explores the basics of the Christian faith.

- For More Information: rlc.sg/alpha
- To Sign Up: rlc.sg/join-alpha (Closing Date: 7 April)

8. 21 Days of Prayer & Fasting - Revive Us, Lord, Align our hearts to Yours. 11-31 Mar. Share how you've been ministered to by the Lord over the past 21 days and give thanks for the areas of your life that have been revived. Submit your thanksgiving to stories@riverlife.org.sg.

9. Our Weekly Prayer Gatherings. RiverLife Prayer Room will be closed on Tue, 2 Apr and resume on Tue, 9 Apr. We will not gather for Revive Night on Wed, 3 Apr and resume on Wed, 10 Apr.

10. The Parents Gathering. 27 Apr, 2.30pm-6pm. Grace Chapel. This platform is designed to help parents of various life-stages to grow in their roles as parents, as well as support one another in their parenting journey. Each quarterly gathering will include short teachings, group connection time, refreshments, as well as parents processing time.

- No fees required
- Closing Date: 24 April 2024
- Registration: rlc.sg/pg

11. Family Life Portal.

- Our Family Life ministry strengthens relationships within the family so that they are reflective of who God is – married couples loving and serving each other, parents discipling their children in the ways of God, grandparents inspiring the generations by their faith and actions, and the singles living secure and fruitful lives for God's kingdom! RiverLife's Family Life portal is an online platform that contains this year's calendar of Family Life initiatives as well as a wide range of resources for various life stages.
- Access the portal: rlc.sg/familylife or www.riverlife.org.sg (Under the "Resources" tab)

- YA Gatherings (For Young Adults in their 20s). First Saturday Every Month, 5pm-8.30pm Victory Chapel (Level 1).**
The YA Gathering is a space where young adults can get together to connect and build community. This gathering is made up of two components – Community Conversations & Communal Dinner – both with a focus on relationship building and life conversations. If you are interested in joining the gatherings and would like to find out more, connect with us on our Telegram Channel: [rlc.sg/ya](https://t.me/rlc.sg/ya)

Gathering Dates: 24 Feb, 6 Apr, 4 May, 1 Jun, 3 Aug, 7 Sep, 5 Oct, 2 Nov

YA Camp: 5-7 Jul

Christmas Outreach: 14 Dec

- RiverLife Prayer Meetings.**

- *RLC Prayer Room.* Tue, 8-9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Livestream: rlc.sg/rpr-watch)
- *Revive Nights.* Wed, 8pm – 9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Livestream: rlc.sg/revivenights)

We encourage you to set aside every Wednesday for a time of fasting.

- Quarterly Calendar for Key English Adult Congregation Events**

**Some dates are tentative and subjected to change. Stay updated via our digital bulletin and our social media channels for the latest information.*

Quarter 2	Quarter 3
<p><u>April</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 06 Apr to 22 Jun – YA Gathering, Alpha #1 • 07 Apr – Dating Couples Briefing #1 • 13 Apr – Caleb Ministry Gathering • 27 Apr – The Parent’s Gathering (New) <p><u>May</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 04 May – YA Gathering • 17 to 18 May – Leaders Advance (Non-Stay In) • 24 to 31 May – Equipping #1: Numbers • 30 May to 01 Jun – SuperLife Camp <p><u>June</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2, 23, 30 Jun – Marriage Preparation Course #2 • 08 Jun – Caleb Ministry Gathering, Water Baptism Class #2 • 09 Jun – RiverLife AGM • 13 to 16 Jun – Youth Camp • 27 Jun – Fun Day (Youth) • 29 Jun – Parents Gathering #2 	<p><u>July</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 to 7 Jul – YA Camp • 13 Jul – Caleb Ministry • 14 Jul – Dating Couples Briefing #2 • 20 to 21 Jul – RTF 1B • 21 Jul – EA Welcome Lunch • 28 Jul – Baptism Service #2 <p><u>August</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 03 Aug – YA Gathering • 03 Aug to 3 Oct – Alpha Run #2 • 04 Aug – Q3 Leaders Huddle • 17 Aug – Parents Gathering #3 • 24 to 25 Aug – RLC 33rd Anniversary Weekend, RTF (Round Robin) <p><u>September</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 07 Sep – YA Gathering • 01 to 15 Sep – Marriage Preparation Course #3 • 01 to 29 Sep – SPYces • 06 to 15 Sep – Equipping #2: Deuteronomy • 14 Sep – Caleb Ministry Gathering • 22 Sep – EA Mid-Autumn Lunch Outreach

Quarter 4

October

- 05 Oct – YA Gathering, Water Baptism Class #3
- 06 to 20 – Marriage Preparation Course #3
- 12 Oct – Caleb Ministry Gathering
- 13 Oct – Discipleship @ Home for Pre-School Parents (Parents Equipping)
- 16 to 23 Oct – Feast of the Tabernacles
- 19 Oct – Fun Day (Youth)
- 26 Oct – Local Outreach (Youth)

November

- 02 Nov – YA Gathering
- 7 to 9 Nov – Ministry Orientation Camp for Sec 1s (Youth)
- 10 Nov – Discipleship @ Home for Primary School Parents (Parents Equipping)
- 10 Nov – Water Baptism Service #3
- ~~15-24 Nov – Equipping #4~~
- 23-25 Nov – Marriage Retreat

December

- 14 Dec – YA Christmas Outreach, Caleb Ministry Gathering
- 19 to 21 Dec – Youth Conference
- 21-22 Dec – Christmas Outreach Weekend
- 28 Dec – Parents Gathering #4

Ministry & Opportunities



1. The 9M Ministry.

This ministry provides prayer support for expectant mothers on their 9-month journey of pregnancy. Sisters-in-Christ who are fellow RiverLifers are assigned as Prayer Buddies to walk alongside mums who sign up to receive prayer support.

- Receive Prayer Support: rlc.sg/9m
- Provide Prayer Support: rlc.sg/serve

2. Missions Microsite.

Discover how you can go, give and pray for the nations. Let's make a difference in the nations together! For more information, visit rlc.sg/missions.

3. RiverLife Cares Opportunities.

Enquiries/Registration: rlc.sg/serve-rlcares

4. Prayer Ministry.

If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (eg. fear, worry, etc), you can sign up for RiverLife's RTF ministry: bit.ly/rlcrtf

1. Bible Reading Plan.

The church has provided 3 undated Bible Reading plans that will serve as a resource for those who wish to follow a Bible Reading plan. Link: rlc.sg/brp

- 2 Year Chronological Bible Reading Plan.
- 3 Year Bible Reading Schedule (Alternating readings between Old and New Testament passages)
- Redemptive Historical Bible Reading Plan (At your own pace, focusing on the redemption story)

2. RiverLife Podcast.

The RiverLife Podcast allows you to listen to RiverLife content anytime, anywhere! The link to go to is rlc.sg/podcast or simply search 'The RiverLife Podcast' on Spotify.

3. Spiritual Growth Resources.

We have put together a curated list of recommended resources for the RiverLife family. These resources (books, articles, podcasts and videos) are recommendations for the various spiritual growth stages as you seek to grow deeper in the River of God this year. You can access them at rlc.sg/resource. This list will be continually populated throughout the year.

4. Testimony.

If you have a testimony to share, you can write to us at stories@riverlife.org.sg to share with us your testimony as an encouragement to others.

5. Stay Connected with RLC.

Follow us to stay updated on latest church news and happenings.

WhatsApp Broadcast: rlc.sg/wachannelinvite

Telegram Channel: t.me/RiverLifeChurch

Facebook & Instagram: [@riverlifechurchsg](https://www.instagram.com/riverlifechurchsg)

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