How many of you grew up as an only child? How many wished you had had siblings? If talked to those sitting around you who did have brothers and sister, you might find that they wished they had grown up in a family where they were an only child. As they say, “The Grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.” Some would have glowing stories of joy and harmony, brothers and sisters who loved and supported each other. And some would have heartbreaking stories of sibling rivalry, jealousies, unrelenting envy and ever present strife.

Whether you grew up as an only child, or in a family with sisters and brother, there is one thing we all share … all of us want to belong to a family that “gets along”… we want to be part of a loving family that always trusts, protects, hopes and perseveres.

Not surprising that God’s word elevates the value of UNITY between brothers/sisters. *Psalm 133:1 (NIV) ÷ How good and pleasant it is when [brothers and sisters] live together in unity!*

God’s Word commands us to live a life of love, to honor one another, *Romans 12:10 (NIV) Ê Be devoted to one another in [brotherly] love. Honor one another above yourselves. Philadelphia - city of brotherly love*

As I began thinking about the two brothers Jesus introduces us to in today’s parable, it dawned on me that the Bible begins with three stories filled with sibling rivalry.

**Genesis 4. Cain and Able.** The first murder. Lord comes to Cain. Gen 4:6,7 “Why are you downcast? Why countenance fallen? If you do well will not your countenance be lifted up? But if you do not do well sin is crouching at the door and it’s desire is for you, but you must master it.” [Driven out].

**Genesis 25 Jacob and Esau.** Twins. Esau comes out first, with his brother grasping his heel. Jacob is a Hebrew idiom for “he deceives” … Trickster. Intense Sibling rivalry. Esau sold birthright for soup. Jacob stole Esau’s blessing through trickery. [On the run, fearful and scheming … eventually reconciled]

**Genesis 37 Joseph and his brothers.** Dreams, Coat. Brothers hated, sold him into slavery. After a series of unfortunate circumstances, Joseph rises to PM of Egypt. [Deep wounds] … could have harbored bitterness but didn’t. You meant it for evil.

**Please open your Bibles to Luke 15 Page 849.**

Jesus tells parable. A Tale of Two Brothers, aka The Prodigal Son.

Story of a loving gracious, extravagant father, who loves both sons with all his heart.
**ACT #1 Luke 15:11–32 (NIV) The Parable of the Lost Son**

11 Jesus continued, “There was a man who had two sons.
12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.
13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.
17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’
20 So he got up and went to his father.

As Jesus tells story, focuses on younger brother first …
Demanded his inheritance (insult), cashed out and went on a party binge. Wasted.
A Jewish boy in a distant country, so needy he ended up slopping pigs. Starving
His life had collapsed. He had lost his way. He had nothing, He had hit the bottom.
To his credit, he came to his senses. Looking at his life, he admitted that the life he was living was awful, tragic and that he had wasted it all. Longed for home.
Realized that home wasn’t so bad after all. It would be better to be servant in the house of his father, than a starving scavenger living in a foreign land. REPENTED
Changed mind about self … utterly LOST. Changed mind about Father generous dad.
Returned home, We know him as the Prodigal. But this boy, was not the only prodigal in the story. **The boy was wasteful, but the Father was extravagant.**

**ACT #2** “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.
21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’
22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

Father had been waiting, watching, hoping and praying. Father lived with the hope that his son would come to his senses and come home.
Apparently, went out of his way (daily) to a place where he could see the distance.
And when he did see him in distance, the Father couldn’t contain himself. He ran … Scandalous … the father running, draping arms around disheveled son. This kind of behavior would have been frowned upon.

Best Robe - proof of the Father’s love. Mean’t he belonged, part of the family.
Ring - symbol of fathers authority. Could transact business in family name.
Sandals - He was a son. not a servant, servants didn’t wear sandals.
Fattened calf, Feast - rejoicing, recurring theme along with other two stories. JOY.
Father never stopped loving the son, even while the son was squandering, wasting.

“He was dead and is alive again … reborn. He was Lost and is found.”

Picture of regeneration - when we repent, change mind about self (not good enough), change mind about Jesus (only one who is good enough).
Get a New LIFE. Welcomed into family. Father invites all to celebrate return of lost son.

But the story doesn't end with a home-coming party.
There is something else going on here, and someone else, easily might be easily overlooked, who is a prominent player in this family drama.
While the Younger brother represents one kind of lostness … it becomes apparent that the older brother is just as lost … another kind of lostness that is just as deadly.

**Act #3 Jesus story turns it’s attention on the older son.**

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 “ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

The older son’s part in the drama might be overlooked because He looks good, he behaves, he’s dutiful, he does all the right things, he appears to have it all together.

**While his Outward actions are blameless, but inward attitudes are abominable.**
As Jesus speaks we discover the older brother is more lost than his younger sibling.

**Notice what is going on in the family …**
While older son appeared to have a relationship with Father; in reality he really didn’t.
The father had not even told him his younger brother had returned. Dad must have known how his eldest felt about his younger brother. Resented him, angry, wanted dad to exercise tough love and turn the wasted one away ...

The son Didn’t inquire of the Father … makes us think that they (the older son and the Father) must have been estranged; not speaking to each other.

The Lord uses the older brother to unmask the Pharisees claim truly knew the Father. Pharisees were the religious spirits who thought that because of their goodness, their probity, their decorum that the Father owed them something. Judgmental, condemn Like the older brother, Pharisees were so close to the Father, yet so far from him.

Notice Older Brother demonstrates characteristics of someone who is “Truly LOST”.

1. Angry … at Father and Brother. He was seething, dripping with resentment. He broke greatest commands … didn’t love father or brother. He was formulaic, a sequential thinker … If I live a good life, then God owes me. “By fasting, studying, praying and giving the Pharisees hoped to earn blessing from God and merit eternal life.”

How we know we’re lost … when things go wrong we direct anger at God.

2. Proud and Arrogant … Father came to him and pleaded, but he refused to go in. “I never disobeyed your orders. All these years I’ve been obedient.”

3. Self-righteous … “Look at me, I’ve been slaving for you.” But who was he really working for? Working to please self, not father.

4. Wallowing in Self-pity … Stayed outside and pouted. “You never gave me a party. Why should that punk be treated so well? He should have been disowned.”

5. Condemnatory and judgmental … focused on someone else’s sin. Lost Brothers are Able to identify someone else sin, unable to see their own.

Matthew 7:3-5 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

6. Insecure and Threatened … didn’t call brother by his name. Like he was dead.

7. Joyless … everyone was dancing, except the older brother.

Wow … does that remind you of anyone? Sounds a lot like me at times. Jesus is calling out the Pharisee in us.

This parable, like others, contains a twist … the Son who is really LOST is the one son who thinks he isn’t. God doesn’t ask us to clean ourselves up, so then we can come to Him. He searches for us, looks for us, waits for us to return, and when we come home, He embraces.
The first step coming home, is **repentance** … changing mind.  
**About self** … I am LOST. I’m starving. I’ve made a mess. Wasted.  
**About Jesus** … Jesus is ready to forgive and welcome us back. Robe of righteous.  
**About others** … not judging, instead, loving sinners like Jesus does. Refusing to wear the scowl of the Pharisee. Refusing to be the older brother.

**Conclusion:**
No ending to the story. Jesus leaves us hanging. ON purpose … imagine him repenting, or nursing wounds and harboring grudges.  
**Who am I in this story? Which brother will I choose to be?**
The younger brother who “comes to his senses” and returns to the family, broken, confessing sin and repentant. Truly remorseful.  
OR The older brother who stands fast in his condemnation, judgment, unwillingness to forgive or show mercy … stubborn, hard-hearted, self-absorbed.

There is still time for those of us, those who are older brothers to repent.  
Change mind about ourselves, not better, not right, not superior. Just as broken.  
Change mind about our Father … the one who loves us and extends mercy.  
Change mind about our younger brothers … give them a second chance, join in the celebration, welcomes home.  
Jesus is saying, for the sake of the family “comes to your senses” and return … to live life as one in the family. **It is what Jesus prayed in John 17:21.**

What I am praying for our church … Trust God. And trust one another … Unity.  
Brothers/Sisters that love, that trust, protect, hope and persevere.