



GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH
AT CASTLEWOODS

ORDER OF WORSHIP

August 8th, 2021

MORNING WORSHIP

Thomas Winn — Elder/Pastor

The Prelude	Prepare your heart for worship
The Call to Worship	Chris Kimbrell
Trinity Hymnal No. 83	"We Praise Thee O God, Our Redeemer"
The Prayer of Confession and Praise	Seth Lirette
Trinity Hymnal No. 223	"Arise My Soul, Arise"
Trinity Hymnal No. 709	"I Will Sing the Wondrous Story"
The Reading of the Word — <i>Malachi 2:1-9</i>	Hal Pritchard
Trinity Hymnal No. 685	"Tell Me the Story of Jesus"
The Pastoral Prayer	Pastor Winn
The Sermon — <i>"The Older Brother" (Luke 15:25-32)</i>	Pastor Winn
A Time of Reflection Upon the Word Preached	
Trinity Hymnal No. 694	"Softly and Tenderly"
The Benediction	Hal Pritchard
The Postlude	

EVENING WORSHIP

The Prelude	Prepare your heart for worship
Baptist Hymnal No. 379	"Brethren, We Have Met to Worship"
Baptist Hymnal No. 413	"Faith is the Victory"
The Sermon — <i>"Ezekiel's Ecclesiastes" (Ezekiel 27:1-36)</i>	Hal Pritchard
A Time of Reflection Upon the Word Preached	
Baptist Hymnal No. 334	"Blessed Assurance"
The Benediction	Pastor Winn
The Postlude	



COMMENTARY

John Sartelle

Self-righteousness cannot exist without producing an attitude of moral superiority, a lack of mercy, and a joyless servitude. The elder brother of the prodigal in Jesus' parable is a living picture of these characteristics that always suckle at the breast of self-righteousness. Every sermon on the "prodigal son" that I heard as a youth ended with the party the gracious father threw in celebration of the return of his repentant son. As a covenant child, I was led by such sermons to wonder at the inexplicable grace to this debauched wastrel. However, Jesus continued the story past the party. Enter the older brother. He had been working on a distant part of the farm. He returned home in the midst of the revelry. In their culture, such a festivity lasted for days. He wondered what event had caused this spontaneous outburst. The servants told him his younger brother had returned home. The older brother did not share his father's enthusiasm for the return of his wayward sibling. Essentially he said: "This party is for my selfish, arrogant, and ungrateful brother? My father has become a doting old fool." He went to his quarters and would not go to the party. The father came out and begged him to join the festivities. Then the son erupted: "Let me get this straight. That son of yours in there—that selfish, arrogant, and ungrateful profligate—came to you and told you he wished you were dead. He took what would still be earning you and our family interest and went to an ungodly metropolis. He threw away all that money for which you had labored in providing for the future of your family. He ran with prostitutes. He brought shame to you and our family name. The last I heard, he had sunk so low he was living with unclean animals. He comes traipsing back here and you fall all over him like a silly grandparent. I have stayed with you through thick and thin. I have worked hard for you. I have been a dutiful son. You never gave me a party like this. You didn't make a fuss over me like this." Maybe the older brother was right. I think I also would have been upset. Disobedience seemed to be rewarded and obedience seemed to go unrewarded. Listening to Jesus tell the story were many people who thought like the elder brother. Read the opening verses of the chapter. To whom was Jesus speaking? "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them'" (Luke 15:1-2). He aimed the parable at the Pharisees. They were the opposite of the prodigal. They were the prototype of the older brother in the parable. In his self-righteousness, the older brother thought he was morally superior to his debased sibling. His attitude said, "I could never do anything like that." As he looked at his brother, he felt neither empathy nor sympathy. He was not thinking: "You know, I could have been that arrogant, selfish, and ungrateful. I could have wandered off into that miserable life. I could

have sunk to the humiliation of eating with the pigs." He did not see that he was indeed just that selfish, arrogant, and ungrateful. He did not see himself as a fellow sinner to his brother. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once said, "There is no crime of which I consider myself incapable." He understood the incredible potential of his sinful nature to do evil. The self-righteous older brother would never hear the confession of his sinful brother and say, "Your transgressions are forgiven, pray for me, a fellow sinner." In his self-righteousness, he had neither love nor mercy for His brother. Notice he did not call him "my brother" when he spoke to their father. He called him "this son of yours" (v. 30). The parable suggests he knew some details of his brother's activity. Yet, there had been no mission of mercy to rescue him and bring him home. If one has never known the need for mercy for himself, he is not apt to show mercy to others. His own brother being alive and well meant nothing to him. You want to ask: "Are you a member of this family? Do you feel nothing that your father feels?" In his self-righteousness, his service was nothing more than a joyless servitude: "Look, these many years I have served you." The Greek word Jesus used here was one used for a slave's work. This son found no joy in working with his father. It was a burden. He was just hanging in there, doing it all until his father died. The graceless service of the self-righteous person is more hard duty than it is a joyful service in thanksgiving. This article is hard for me to write because I know all too well the pretentious moral superiority the older brother demonstrated. I know all too well the graceless condemnation he felt toward the prodigal. I know what it is to labor to obey God's law without the love and joy of serving my gracious Maker and Redeemer. I was the self-righteous older brother. I know personally how self-righteousness ravages the soul. What changed me? I finally saw that Jesus on the cross was my elder brother, dying not for the righteous but for sinners. This parable told by Jesus is really the story of three sons. There was the lost son who returned home. There was the son who was lost at home. And lastly, there was the Son who told the story—the Son who left home to seek and rescue His lost brothers. It is the story of two older brothers. This is the great irony that many of us miss. The one who told the story was our elder brother, who left His Father's house to bring home His lost brothers. Jesus left His Father's house and went to seek the lost for His Father. He was the opposite of the elder brother in the parable. That elder brother watched his father mourn over the son who had gone astray. But he did not go after him for his father. He was not there when his brother's funds were depleted. He was not there when his younger sibling hit bottom. He was not there at the swine trough, saying, "Come on, brother, let's go home." What did Jesus say over and over again? "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).



RESPONSIBILITIES

Today's Nursery Volunteers

August 8th
<i>Morning</i> Rhia McDonough & Mary Hunter Sharp
<i>Evening/Afternoon</i> Bunny Finch & Bethany Wallace
<i>Wednesday - August 11th</i> Bethany Wallace

Today's Sound Operator - Seth Lirette



ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHILDREN'S CHOIR

The Preschool and Children's choir will meet this afternoon.

WORK DAY

There will be a work day on August 14th from 8 am to 12 pm. We will try to do a number of the projects from the GA work list that have not already been done. There will be donuts served at 7:45.

FACILITY PROJECTS

There are still items available on the GA Projects List that need to be completed in advance of the RBNet General Assembly. See Chris if you need a copy of the project list or would like to volunteer for a project.

