



THE BEACON
BREMERTON CHURCH OF CHRIST
500 PLEASANT DRIVE
PO Box 4815 Bremerton WA 98312
360-377-5622

Wi-Fi Access Code: *Godislove*

Randy Fisher
360-271-0810

Mike McCown
360-509-5917

Mike Clark
360-551-5994

Sam Titus
360-698-0430

Elders

Roger Gibson
253-884-2814

Paul Vlastelica
360-308-2416

Dan May
360-471-6197

Deacons

Ron Haws
253-691-3251

Henry Royster
360-865-8646

Tim Turner
360-271-2251

Evangelist

Dan May
360-471-6197

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Us and Them

The Bible is an unlimited source of material. You can hardly read the same passage twice without finding some new meaning or seeing it in a different light. Even if it's a story you've read many times before, there is still a refreshing appreciation for truth when you study it again. The Parable of the Prodigal in Luke 15 is no exception.

Jesus told three parables in this chapter to answer a complaint against Him from the scribes and Pharisees. The word *Pharisee* is from the Hebrew phrase "to separate," and the *scribes* were the experts and teachers of the Law of Moses. But they were grumbling this time saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them," (15:2) The despised tax collectors and sinners of society were coming to Jesus for healing of the soul. His enemies thought that if He was really the Son of God, He would not associate with such people.

"So He told them this parable..." (15:3). The part of the verse that recently knocked me over is the word "them." Jesus' three parables in this context had an intended audience: them. Who are the "them"? The Pharisees and the scribes.

Just because we are no longer living in the 1st Century does not mean that Pharisaism is dead. Why would Jesus spend so much time condemning the attitude and hypocrisy of the religious elite if there was no value or learning we could glean from it? We can become "them," meaning we can become more like the older brother than the prodigal son.

We become "them" **When we grumble while God rejoices.** When the younger son returned home and his father celebrated, the older brother became "angry" (15:28), a word that literally means "enraged." He couldn't even call him his brother, only "this son of yours" (15:30). But his father rejoiced because that which was lost had been found. The lost were the ones Jesus came to seek and to save. While the Pharisees and scribes were complaining about sinners being forgiven, the angels were rejoicing in the presence of God.

Do you want God's justice or mercy on others? We must start viewing the lost the way God sees them. He sees lost sheep who need a shepherd. He sees a lost coin that still has value and usefulness in His service. He sees a lost son whom He desperately wants back in the safety of His house. Inasmuch as we want God to receive us when we have sinned, so let us receive one another. And let us rejoice and not grumble when a sinner comes to repentance. Else, we become one of "them."

When we compare ourselves with the wrong standard. The older son looked pretty good next to his brother. "For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours...but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him" (15:29-30). The problem with that line of reasoning is that God has never said He would compare one son to another. He uses a different standard.

What if we measured ourselves next to Jesus, the Son of God? Instead of looking around us and deciding that our spiritual condition is superior to the lowly "sinners," we ought to stand next to Jesus and see how far we fall short. "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23) and are in need of God's grace. Through Him, we can be made into the image of His Son. When we lose sight of what we are without Him, we become like one of "them."

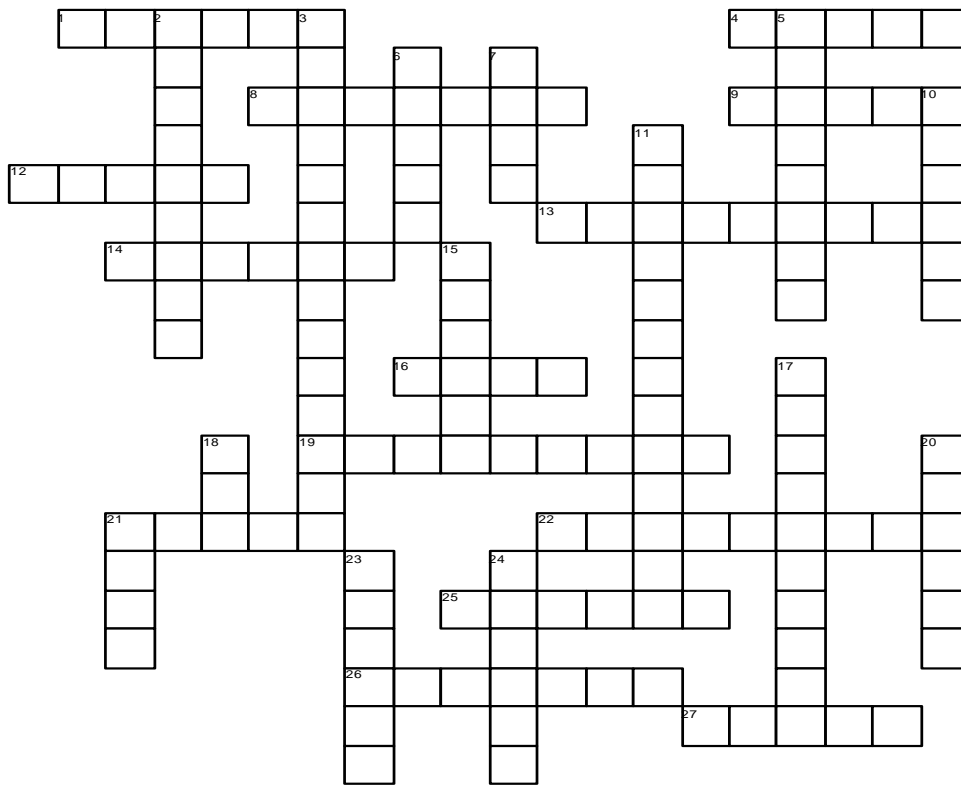
When we expect to be rewarded for our righteousness. "You have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends" (15:29). The older son felt that if the rankest sinner got the fattened calf, that which was reserved for a special occasion, where is the reward for the one who has been working at home the whole time? He was entitled to that; he deserved it, so he thought.

Do you really want God to deal with you based on what you deserve? "Son...all that is mine is yours" (15:31). Shouldn't that be enough? He made you in His image. He crowned you with glory and honor. He provided for your salvation. He blessed you with more than you will ever need. What should be our attitude in return? "So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done'" (Luke 17:10). Otherwise, we are like "them."

God is calling all of His children to come home. Those who have wandered away, He is ready to receive back safe and sound. Those who have been selfish, hypocritical, and unforgiving, He waits with open arms. "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1). I want to remain in that relationship with God.

Bubba Garner

Angelic Appearances



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

ACROSS

- 1 Called a man of valor by an angel
- 4 He wrestled with an angel and would not let go
- 8 An angel prevented him from killing his son
- 9 An angel appeared to him from a bush that burned but was not consumed
- 12 Saw an angel striking the people for a sin he himself had committed
- 13 An angel told him to send for Peter
- 14 An angel strengthened him twice for his long journey
- 16 Saw an angel with a key to the pit
- 19 Could not speak after being visited by an angel
- 21 Was kicked awake by an angel
- 22 Were told of the birth of the Messiah by angels
- 25 Protected from lions by an angel
- 26 Carried by angels to Abraham's bosom
- 27 Was strengthened by angels in the wilderness after fasting

DOWN

- 2 Angels told them Jesus would return in the same way he left
- 3 He saw the angel of the Lord rescue three men from the fiery furnace
- 5 They were freed from prison by an angel
- 6 An angel told her to go back to her mistress
- 7 Was told she was highly favored and that the Lord was with her by an angel
- 10 His mother was told by an angel that he would be a Nazarene from birth
- 11 Angels told her Jesus was risen
- 15 Saw an angel ascend in the flame of his offering to God
- 17 They were led to their inheritance by an angel
- 18 Saw angels strike men with blindness
- 20 Was told to flee to Egypt by an angel
- 21 An angel told him that no one on ship would die in the storm
- 23 An angel told him where to go to preach
- 24 He was saved from death at the hands of an angel by his donkey

SOUNDINGS FOR OUR MEMBERS

Remember These In Your Prayers

The Barbers	Rubin Carter	The Haws
The Kryders	Charles Nance	Rhonda Parnell
Ray Quick	Kitty Reynard	The Sands
Roy Sutherland	Megan Vaughn*	Debbie Walker

Away With The Military
Zacharee Brown

Those Traveling
Fluffy Hartz

Services This Week

Zoom Worship:

Sunday 9:00 AM

Zoom Bible Classes

Sunday 5:00 PM

Wednesday 7:00 PM

Deacon Duties Thru December

Benevolence:	<i>Paul, Ron & Jeff</i>
Service Roster:	<i>Mike Mc. & Tim</i>
Children's classes:	<i>Ron</i>
Sun PM Announcements:	<i>Henry & Mike C.</i>
Wed PM Announcements:	<i>Ron</i>

HEALTH:

- **Myrna Campbell's** recent surgery was successful. She has family helping her and needs no extra help at present
- **Misako Haws'** eye surgery was successful; she is just awaiting full recovery
- **Ron Haws** has an appointment with a specialist tomorrow about the mass discovered during his recent colonoscopy

TRAVELING:

Fluffy Hartz is in the Spokane area traveling with her visiting family. She'll return Tuesday

MOURNING:

Roy Sutherland's mother, Elma, passed away last week. Additionally, Roy expects to undergo hernia surgery in two weeks. Here is Roy and his wife Kim's address:

3633 7th Ave SW #20.

Olympia, WA 98502. Kim's email: *kimberlymcune1975@gmail.com*.

Cards or letters of encouragement would be appreciated and they could also use help to defray funeral costs.

Online Gatherings:

In addition to those services listed above in the "Service This Week" box:

Sunday PM — 1:00 Hymn appreciation class