

Luke 15:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Analysis

The father responds to the elder brother: 'It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found' (εὐφρανθῆναι δὲ καὶ χαρῆναι ἔδει, ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός σου οὗτος νεκρὸς ἦν καὶ ἔζησεν, καὶ ἀπολωλὼς καὶ εὗρέθη). The verb 'edei' (ἔδει, it was necessary) indicates moral obligation—celebration is the only appropriate response to resurrection from death. The father's 'this thy brother' (ὁ ἀδελφός σου οὗτος) reminds the elder son of family relationship, countering his bitter 'this thy son' (v.30). The dead/alive, lost/found contrasts frame salvation as resurrection and recovery, not mere moral improvement. The parable's open ending (we do not know if the elder brother joins the feast) leaves the Pharisees to decide their response to God's grace.

Historical Context

The elder brother represents the Pharisees—dutiful external service without heart transformation, resentment of grace shown to sinners, entitlement mentality ('thou never gavest me a kid,' v.29). His refusal to enter the feast mirrors Pharisaic rejection of Jesus' fellowship with sinners. The father's patient appeal ('Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine,' v.31) demonstrates God's kindness even to the self-righteous, inviting them to abandon their merit-based religion for grace. The parable warns that legalistic religion can be as far from God as scandalous sin.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the elder brother's resentment expose the danger of religious duty without genuine love for God?
2. In what ways might you identify more with the elder brother than the prodigal, and how should this shape your response to God's grace?

Interlinear Text

εὐφρανθῆναι	δὲ	καὶ	χαρῆναι	ἔδει	ὅτι	ὁ	
that we should make merry	It was	and	be glad	meet	for	G3588	
G2165	G1161	G2532	G5463	G1163	G3754		
ἀδελφός	σου	οὗτος	νεκρὸς	ἦν,	καὶ	ἀνέζησεν	καὶ
brother	thy	this	dead	was	and	is alive again	and
G80	G4675	G3778	G3498	G2258	G2532	G326	G2532
ἀπολωλώς	ἦν,	καὶ	εὗρέθη				
lost	was	and	is found				
G622	G2258	G2532	G2147				

Additional Cross-References

Luke 15:24 (Parallel theme): For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Isaiah 35:10 (Parallel theme): And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Psalms 51:8 (Parallel theme): Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Romans 3:4 (Parallel theme): God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

Hosea 14:9 (Parallel theme): Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Luke 7:34 (Parallel theme): The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!

Romans 3:19 (Parallel theme): Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.