

## **The Prodigal Son**

### **Luke 15: 11-32**

#### **Introduction**

This morning, I want to look at the “Parable of the Prodigal Son” which is probably a parable that many of us are already familiar with. The word prodigal means spending money or resources freely and recklessly; wastefully extravagant or having or giving something on a lavish scale.

Let us set the background for this parable so that we can see who all the people that are involved in this parable. One of the main characters that we see in this story is, the forgiving father, whose character remains constant throughout the story, is a picture of God. In telling the story, Jesus identifies Himself with God in His loving attitude to the lost. The younger son symbolizes the lost (the tax collectors and sinners of that day, and the elder brother represents the self-righteous (the Pharisees and teachers of the law of that day,

The major theme of this parable seems not to be so much the conversion of the sinner, as in the previous two parables of Luke 15, but rather the restoration of a believer into fellowship with the Father. In the first two parables, the owner went out to look for what was lost whereas in this story the father waits and watches eagerly for his son’s return. We see in this story the graciousness of the father overshadowing the sinfulness of the son, as it is the memory of the father’s goodness that brings the prodigal son to repentance.

#### **Luke 15:11-32**

<sup>11</sup> And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to

feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’” <sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup> And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

## I. Actions of the Younger Son

### **Deuteronomy 21:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn, <sup>17</sup> but he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the first fruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his.

### **Luke 12:15**

<sup>15</sup> And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”

### **Proverbs 27:19**

<sup>19</sup> As in water face reflects face,  
so the heart of man reflects the man.

### **Matthew 6:21**

<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

### **Luke 15:17**

<sup>17</sup> “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’

## II. The Fathers Love

### Luke 15:20-21

<sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

### Luke 15:22-24

<sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

### Psalm 51:1

**51** Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy  
blot out my transgressions.

### Psalm 116:5

<sup>5</sup> Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;  
our God is merciful.

### Isaiah 30:18

<sup>18</sup> Therefore the LORD waits to be gracious to you,  
and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you.  
For the LORD is a God of justice;  
blessed are all those who wait for him.

## III. Reaction of the Older Son

### 1 John 2:9-11

<sup>9</sup> Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. <sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is

no cause for stumbling. <sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

### **Isaiah 55:7**

<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake his way,  
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

### **Colossians 3:13**

<sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

## **Conclusion**

We all have lived a part of this story of the prodigal son in one way or another as either the younger son or the older son. The core of redemption is the experience of forgiveness, and the experience of the grace of God. One of the greatest tragedies is that there are so many people still wandering away from God, afraid to come home because they might be afraid that they might be judged by others for what they had done. But God is like this father, who, when he sees us in the distance, runs towards us, and falls upon our necks and hugs us and kisses us. He doesn't make us go over all the vivid details of our lostness and wastefulness, but he welcomes us back and forgives us. That's grace.

### **Henri J.M. Nouwen**

“I am the prodigal son every time I search for unconditional love where it cannot be found.”