

The Parables of Jesus

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Pastor/Teacher Ken L. Birks

I. Introductory Remarks.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son – Luke 14:11-32¹

In this parable, Jesus emphasized the importance of a lost soul returning to the Heavenly Father. He dealt with several important areas:

1. **Rebellion** – The young son rebelling against his father.
2. **Riotous living of the son** – living in sin never satisfies.
3. **Repentance** – the son saw his mistake and repented.
4. **Restoration** – the father restored the runaway son.
5. **Rejection** – the son who stayed home became angry at the love shown by the father to the prodigal son.

Jesus is not dealing here with the whole gospel message but with the one great fact of the Father's pardoning love. This is a message of God's forgiving love for sinners.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

As we look at this parable, let's look at how God the Father relates to us personally and also how He relates to the world in a general sense, because the world itself is like a prodigal son unto the Father.

It chronicles the process in many of our lives of what we go through before we really come to a comprehensive understanding of God's great love.

II. The Spiritual Journey of the Prodigal Son.

What this parable really shows us is the spiritual journey many of us go through or went through in finding ourselves in the hands of a loving Heavenly Father.

1. Selfishness & Rebellion are Experience.

Luke 15:11-12 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So

¹ All Scripture references are New King James unless otherwise noted.

he divided to them his livelihood.

¹³ *And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.*

• **The Root Problem**

In these two verses we find the root problem of what made this son turn away from his father and all that he had to offer him. He was full of self-will and selfishness with a desire to experience the sins of youth.

By faith Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.

Hebrews 11:25 *choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,*

This is the story of people who foolishly follow the lusts and desires of the world rather than following God.

2. The Son Forsakes the Love and Security of His Father for a Fling with the World.

Luke 15:13 *And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.*

1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*

This passage speaks of the lusts of the world that everyone deals with at one time or another. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are all areas of temptation that draw us away from the love of the Father.

This is exactly what the son did. He went out from the covering of his father and wasted his life and his substance with riotous living.

3. Disaster Strikes

Luke 15:14 *But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.*

What often happens in situations like this is that we end up reaping what we sow. His money ran out and then to add to the problem the country was experiencing a famine.

- **This could be indicative of the world in the last days.**

The world has been like the prodigal son following its lusts, living in extravagance, spending its inheritance, but there is going to come a day of reckoning when it all runs out and to top it off the world will begin to feel the effects of the birth pangs mentioned in Matthew 24 and as a result will be in tremendous want.

Revelation 6:5-6 *When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."*

Matthew 24:7 *For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.*

4. The Consequences of Living a Foolish Life.

1 Timothy 6:9 *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

Psalms 107:17 *Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted.*

Proverbs 13:15 *Good understanding gains favor, But the way of the unfaithful is hard.*

5. Desperation Brings us to Our Senses.

Luke 15:17 *But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!'*

The Son came to himself. In other words, he came to his senses. As disillusionment set in, he came to his senses. Hardship has a wonderful way of bringing men to face facts. The prodigal reflected on the contrast between the

starvation he was experiencing and the full and plenty enjoyed not only by his father and brother alone, but by his father's hired servants. Even for them there was bread enough to spare.

Psalms 107:18-20 *Their soul abhorred all manner of food, And they drew near to the gates of death. ¹⁹ Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, And He saved them out of their distresses. ²⁰ He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.*

6. The Moment of Decision.

Luke 15:18-19 ¹⁸ *I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." '*

The prodigal son makes an important decision as a result of coming to his senses. He comes to a place of repentance, humility and confession and realizes how unworthy he is.

7. The Compassion and Forgiveness of the Father.

This is the beautiful part of the story. Even though the prodigal son had wasted his life, his father was waiting to receive him back with open arms.

Luke 15:20-21 *And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

The father ran out to meet him. Christ also invites us to come.

Revelation 3:20 *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

- **The son confesses his mistakes. We too, must confess to God.**

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

8. The Robe of Righteousness.

Luke 15:22 *But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.'*

- **The father has the servants bring out the best robe to put on him as well as a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.**

This speaks of how he was fully received back into the family.

- The best robe was a sign of position
- The ring conveyed authority.
- The sandals marked him out as a freeman.

When we come into the arms of our heavenly Father, He clothes us with a robe of righteousness.

Job 29:14 *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban.*

Isaiah 61:10 *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Zechariah 3:3-4 *Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. ⁴ Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."*

When the father clothed his prodigal son with the best robe, he was saying to his son and to all those around him that his son was totally forgiven in his sight and his sins would not be held against him.

Psalms 103:12 *As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

9. Rejoicing Over a Repentive Sinner.

Luke 15:23-24 *And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.*

The father further exemplifies the heart of God when he shows rejoicing over his repentive son.

Luke 15:7 *I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.*

10. The Elder Son's Reaction.

Luke 15:25-32 *Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' ²⁸ But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "*

The lesson here is not to take on the attitude of the Pharisees. Let's not let our carnal attitudes to cause us to be like this older brother who was exhibiting a pharisaical attitude towards sinners.

- **We must rejoice when a sinner repents.**

Regardless of a person's past life, God has forgiven and forgotten their sin. If a person wastes his life, don't be critical. Show God's love and compassion toward them.