

A Blessed Reunion

Key Verse: *“This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”*
—Luke 15:24

Selected Scripture:
Luke 15:11-24

“The Parable of the Merciful and Loving Father.” Clearly the father in this story is meant to symbolically represent God. Most importantly, it speaks with power to the fact that God is love.

For those who have a desire to turn from the ways of sin and be received back into the family of God, perhaps no other parable has been so helpful in illuminating his love and the desire to accept them. The poor and needy, the sinful and the weak, see their own picture in this parable. They are encouraged by its representation of the Father as all-loving. He is willing to receive them, but additionally is watching and waiting for any sign of return so that he may meet and welcome the repentant one.

This image of God is in stark contrast to the thought generally held about him. Our Heavenly Father’s character has been so misrepresented by erroneous creeds that most people fear him. Being fearful, they expect no warm and loving reception from him. The fact that the father in this parable was watching and waiting for his wayward

THE PASSAGE FROM

which our Key Verse and Selected Scripture is taken is the parable of the prodigal son. It is so named because of the son’s prodigious—or immense—appetite for earthly pleasures and wasteful spending. While this is so, the parable might with equal validity be titled,

son, and even ran out to meet him, is a powerful testimony to the caring and loving nature of God. As the proper understanding of God's character reaches those who are spiritually poor and depraved, they receive hope. This parable and other scriptures give assurance that the statement, "God is love," is genuine. (I John 4:16, *New American Standard Bible*) The hope thus imparted has led sincere believers during this Gospel Age to a full return and surrender to the "God of all grace."—I Pet. 5:10

In the parable, the prodigal son is represented as finally coming to his senses. He awakens to a realization of his dire need and the fact that his father has abundant wealth. His father would likely be willing to let him have a share in the blessings which he no longer deserved, even if it was to live as a servant. His expression, "I will arise and go to my father," represents what should be the attitude of all who are repentant. (Luke 11:18) The nature of their attitude should be one of reliance upon the love and mercy of the Heavenly Father.

Indeed, we have perceived our neediness, and the abundant provision which God has made in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. Being thus forgiven, we have been welcomed to his love and care—returning to his fold—in harmony with the one from whom all blessings flow. The joy of sweet reconciliation with God is made clear in today's parable lesson.

In addition, as Christians, we have a ministry of reconciliation entrusted to us. "All things are from God, the One having reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and having given to us the ministry of reconciliation. . . . On behalf of Christ, we are ambassadors, as God is exhorting through us, we beseech on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God." (II Cor. 5:18,20, *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*) As Christ's ambassadors, we are charged with promoting the word of reconciliation, beseeching the fallen human family to return to God—a blessed reunion! ■