

The Prodigal Son

Key Verses: *“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. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”*
—*Luke 15:22-24,*
New King James Version

Selected Scripture:
Luke 15:11-24

no other parable so helpful in illuminating the love of God and his desire to accept them. They are encouraged by its representation of the Father as one who is not only willing to receive them, but watching and waiting for any sign of return, and then running out to meet the repentant one. Jesus said earlier, “There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than

OUR LESSON IS COMMONLY referred to as the parable of the prodigal son, because of the son’s reckless appetite for earthly pleasures and wasteful spending. With greater validity, however, it could be titled the parable of the merciful and loving father. Clearly the father in this story is meant to represent God, as the nature and depth of our Heavenly Father’s love and mercy are powerfully emphasized in the words Jesus spoke. Like a father, God both yearns and watches for repentant sinners to return to him. He is not a destroyer, but a savior.

Those desiring to repent of sinful ways and be received back into the family of God will find

over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”
—Luke 15:7, *NKJV*

This portrait of God contradicts the general perception of him. His character has been misrepresented by erroneous creeds, causing most people to fear him. Thus they expect no warm or loving reception from him. The fact that the father in this parable was watching and waiting for his wayward son, and even ran out to meet him, is a powerful testimony to the caring and loving nature of God. As the proper thought of God’s character reaches those who are spiritually poor and debased, they receive renewed hope of a full return to God and acceptance by him.

The prodigal son came to his senses. He awakened to a realization of his dire need and the fact that his father had 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 repent. (vs. 18) Indeed, we all are to perceive our own neediness, and the abundant provision which God has made in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins. Being thus forgiven we are welcomed again to his love and care, and back into harmony with the one from whom all blessings flow.

The joy of sweet reconciliation with God is made clear in today’s lesson. We, as Christians, have been reconciled to God through Jesus, and now a ministry of reconciliation has been entrusted to us. (II Cor. 5:18) “We are ambassadors, as God is exhorting through us, we beseech on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.” (vs. 20, *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*) As God’s ambassadors, we are charged with preaching the word of reconciliation. “On behalf of Christ,” we beseech the sin-afflicted human family, the prodigals of the parable, to be reconciled to God. ■