

Sunday 27 March 2022 – The Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11 - 31

11 Jesus continued: 'There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, "Father, give me my share of the estate." So he divided his property between them.

13 'Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 'When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants." 20 So he got up and went to his father.

'But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms round him and kissed him.

21 'The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

22 'But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate.

25 'Meanwhile, the elder son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 "Your brother has come," he replied, "and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound."

28 'The elder brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!"

31 "'My son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

This is such a lovely parable, one that speaks to us differently depending on where we are in our lives and what we are currently experiencing. Over the next three days we will pick up on the three main characters and how we find ourselves in these characters.

Firstly there is the Prodigal Son after whom this parable is named. As we go through life, we hit times in our lives where we just insist on having it our own way, where we don't want to listen to what God has to say for our lives, where we know that we're probably going off track but we're stubborn and the other options out there seem so inviting and exciting and so we wander off in the wrong direction. Sometimes it's really obvious that we're doing the wrong thing, but it feels so good that we just don't care but sometimes, we start off just a little bit off line, we still go to church, we still seem to be doing everything right but there's just some area of our life that is not right and it's pulling us further and further away from God. Maybe it's a bad habit, maybe it's our finances or our work, maybe it's a relationship, maybe it's an addiction, it could be anything that is taking our focus off God and beginning to make our lives revolve around it instead of God. Whatever it is at some point we catch a wake up and realise things are out of control, things are not as we thought they were and we are in a bad place. We have two choices at that point, just give in totally to this things or make our way back to God and get our lives back under control.

This is where this parable is incredibly helpful, no matter what we've done, or where we've gone or for how long, God the Father, is there waiting to welcome us back. We just need to make the decision to put aside our pride and our wilfulness and return to the safety and security of the Father's house.

Prayer

Gracious Father, you offer us the freedom to choose which path we take for our lives, you do not force us to follow you or follow your rules, you offer us life in abundance in your house but should we choose to follow another path you allow us to explore and see the world for ourselves. Thank you for this freedom that you offer us.

Forgive us Father, when we are ungrateful with what you offer us and seek to claim our own fortune. Forgive us in our selfishness and wilfulness to follow our own rules and our own desires.

Thank you that when we realise the mess we've made of our lives, you do not condemn us and shut us out but rather as we come back to you seeking your forgiveness, you welcome us back with loving arms.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

Rev KS Brown