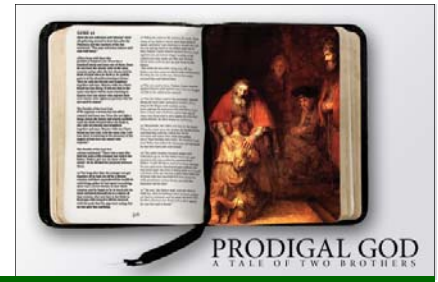


The story begins when the younger son comes to the father and says, "Give me my share of the estate." In ancient times, when the father died, the oldest son always got "a double portion" of what any other child got. If there are two sons, the older would get two-thirds of the estate and so the younger would get one-third. The story opens with the younger son asking for his one-third share of the inheritance.



Luke 15:11-32 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "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. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' 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 around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "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. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 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. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' " 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 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.' "

Reflections

Rebellious child. Black sheep of the family. Wayward son.

The classic message of the parable, The Prodigal Son, centers around the young man who rejects his father and family. Then he carelessly wastes all that his father has given him in an early inheritance, ending up desperate, humbled and hopeless.

"Aha!" he thinks, "I will go back to my father and plead for a job." He has no dream of being reconciled to his family. Though undeserving by lawful standards, his father lavishes this son with love and blessing at his return.

Who is the prodigal? A rebellious son or a love-blinded father? Who has paid the cost for such poor decisions?

While we are impressed with such

a demonstration of mercy, something deep in our humanness questions the wisdom and the fairness of the father's response. We wonder if the son will blow it again. Will the father end up the laughing stock of the community? How will this change the father's

Prodigal:

1. *recklessly extravagant,*
2. *having spent everything*

credibility in other relationships? (Next week we'll dig into the effect on the older brother, in particular.)

It's my guess that every one of us has known a wayward or rebellious person. Those circumstances may have destroyed the fabric of family

relationships. Our insight to this story is highly charged with personal experiences and hard lessons learned. Maybe some of us are even regretting poor choices of our past; saddened by the pain we inflicted on those close to us.

This series is meant to slowly tease out those biases so that we can see ourselves, and more importantly, God our Father, in the light of truth. Our God is *The Prodigal*. He lavishes love and blessing on us who are undeserving, holding back no cost and no regret. Because we are his own, bought with his own blood, he has made us worthy.

—Karen Heist

Series Resource:

The Prodigal God, Timothy Keller, Zondervan, 2008.

Readings

Sunday, February 28

Luke 15:11-32

"Frequently the older sibling is the parent-pleaser, the responsible one who obeys the parental standards. The younger sibling tends to be the rebel, a free spirit who prefers the company and admiration of peers." (Timothy Keller)

How have you observed this dynamic in your own or other families?

Monday, March 1

Luke 15:12

What message was the son conveying to the father when he asked for his inheritance?

Tuesday, March 2

Read the parable again (Luke 15:11-32) to identify when prodigal behavior (reckless, extravagant spender) is demonstrated in this story, and by whom. How does this deepen your understanding of the parable?

Wednesday, March 3

Luke 15:16-19; Colossians 1:9-14

The younger brother believes he is no longer worthy to be called his father's son. What does that tell us about his view of what it takes to be loved and accepted? What do you believe you need to be *worthy*? How does this understanding affect how you live?

Thursday, March 4

Luke 15:20-24; 1 Peter 1:13-16

If God's grace is absolutely free and we cannot earn it, what motivation is there to lead an obedient life?

Friday, March 5

Deuteronomy 9:23-24

Rebellion seems to be an inherent aspect of our fallen nature. Examine the ways that you are rebellious towards your Heavenly Father. Pray for help and forgiveness. Receive His mercy and grace.

Saturday, March 6

Isaiah 55:1-3; Revelation 21:5-7

What does God's mercy cost us? What does God's mercy cost Him?

Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at biblegateway.com.