

“Proclaim”

03-06-16

“It’s the greatest story ever told!” proclaimed Charles Dickens. And while we know him as one of the best storytellers, Dickens wasn’t talking about one of his books, but the Parable of the Prodigal Son!

This story has inspired great works of literature, classic movies, and magnificent art. It’s been studied, dramatized, preached on and discussed. If you were to provide the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a nutshell, you could retell this classic parable of Jesus and you’d see it! The Parable of the Prodigal Son is interesting but also touches what goes on in our lives today.

Open again to Luke 15. Over today and next week, we’ll be looking closely at this parable, trying to catch a glimpse of its meaning for us. There’s great importance in understanding that Jesus tells this story to help us look into the mirror of our own lives as we identify with each one of the characters! We’re reminded over and over of the conspiracy of divine grace that Jesus gives to the world and our lives, as He comes as our Savior.

The title *“The Prodigal Son”* really doesn’t tell the whole story. The story could be called *“The Prodigal Sons”*, *“The Parable of the Loving Father”*, *“The Prodigal God”*, or *“The Return of the Prodigal Son.”* There have been and will continue to be numerous titles with unique insights, but ultimately, the story truly shows that God’s Word is alive and timeless! Above all other insights, stands the greatest impact made as we seek to find ourselves in the story.

Let’s look at the story again using the younger son as our main character today. Verses 11-14, *“And he said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.”*

When a child is lost to his or her family, the intensity of emotions is huge! This home-leaving of the younger son isn’t about a free-spirited boy wanting to sow wild oats. Asking for his inheritance from his father at this time is a blatant statement of contempt! He’s rejecting his father, his home, and his entire community!

It’s as if the younger son is declaring his father might as well be dead, because in the younger son’s mind, his father *is* dead to him! There’s every indication the younger son is choosing to be gone forever! Not only is the younger son lost, but the whole family system is disrupted! **A Lost Child Changes Everyone and Everything.**

Many times in life, we rarely appreciate what we have, until it’s gone! This is most often true in relationships. Our regrets are often about the things, the words, and the opportunities we left undone! When the younger son left home, he was denying the spiritual reality of being in a relationship with father and his God. **Sin is Separation from God.** The greatest tragedy of sin is when we leave the love of God looking for

satisfaction in all the wrong places!

At first, everything was fine for the young son. He had money! He could party! He could buy anything he wanted! He even could buy friends! But when the money ran out, his life collapsed! **The Son Found Himself: Empty, Humiliated, Desperate!** The younger son had been searching for something better in his life, but now it didn't like he had it!

After what had begun as a special time, quickly fell apart! Verses 15-19, *“So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.” ‘*

Since pigs were unclean animals according to the Law, Jesus was suggesting that the younger son became a swine-herding slave to a Gentile! He was even open to eating the sweet, chocolate-like flavor of the pods the pigs ate! When he found himself in this situation, he realized that there had to be something better! Home! and his father's love!

Verses 20-23, *“And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.”*

As we look again at these verses, what this parable proclaims is that God's not defeated by OUR rejection! We're still important to Him! **God, the Loving Father Offers, Forgiveness, Compassion, and Joy!** God, just like the Father in the parable, welcomes us home once again!

The loving father runs out to meet his lost son, broadcasting and proclaiming a humungous welcome! No finger-pointing, no harsh words, but pure grace, unconditional love, and radical hospitality for this homecoming! There's no demand from the Father for repentance as a condition of this welcome. He embraces his son with pure joy in his heart because the tragic story of home-leaving has become the triumph story of home-coming!

What *“this greatest story ever told”* proclaims, is that we have a God Who showers mercy on the undeserving, including you and me! Why? Because **God is Always Seeking the Lost!** When you go out on your own away from Him, He's always there with His arms open wide, ready to welcome you back! Through this experience, you can **Proclaim His Merciful and Everlasting Love** to everyone!

This love is found in the heart of God! Live Lent as a person of the Resurrection and proclaim this Good News day after day wherever you go!