

The Prodigal Son

Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there, wasted his possessions with prodigal living. But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land and he began to be in want. Then, he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate and no one gave him anything. But, when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish 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 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."'"

"And he arose and came to his father. But, when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But 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.' And they began to be merry.

"Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore, his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat that I might make merry with my friends. But, as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. I was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

This beautiful parable tells the story of the sins of a son and the unconditional love of a father. God is our Father who loves us unconditionally. Like the prodigal, we so often turn from our Father and we too must come home through humble repentance. Repentance is a turning from sin and turning toward God. It comes from seeing ourselves as we are. Our Heavenly Father is eagerly waiting with Open Arms for us to see and turn from our sins and come home to Him.

Much is often said about the prodigal son and his father in the parable, but an equally important character is the brother. He is much like the Pharisee we read of last week, trying to measure himself by the sins of his brother. This is an easy trap to fall into with all the evil in the world. We say to ourselves, "I am not as bad as this person," or "At least, I do this." But as a Father, God loves us all; He knows our hearts and what has been given to us. Therefore, He deals with each of us, individually.