

# The PRODIGAL GOD

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## PART 1 – *The Parable*

### | OPENING PRAYER

*Gracious God, you come to us through your Word and feed our faith with the good news of the gospel. As we begin our study of this parable, give us humility and trust. Help us to see, to learn, and to know what you would have us know. Sanctify us in your truth; your Word is truth. Amen.*

### | READ IT THROUGH (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)

<sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup>But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” <sup>3</sup>Then Jesus told them this parable:

<sup>11</sup>Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup>He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>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! <sup>18</sup>I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup>Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup>‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup>The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup>‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup>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.’ ”

## | DIG IN DEEPER

- *What is a parable? For what reasons do you think Jesus uses them?*

### **Matthew 13:10-17**

<sup>10</sup>The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” <sup>11</sup>He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. <sup>13</sup>This is why I speak to them in parables: Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. <sup>14</sup>In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. <sup>15</sup>For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ <sup>16</sup>But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. <sup>17</sup>For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

- *What details about this parable stand out to you? Why?*
- *Who do you think is the central figure in this parable?*
- *What message was the son sending with his demand for the inheritance? How does the father respond?*
- *With whom was the older son upset?*

## | TAKE IT HOME

- *What comfort do you get from knowing that your Savior uses parables to teach you?*
- *With which of the sons do you identify more?*
- *Agree or Disagree: The Bible is a rulebook for Christian living.*
- *Where do you see God’s “prodigal” love in your life?*

## | CLOSING PRAYER

# The PRODIGAL GOD

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## PART 2 – *The People*

### | OPENING PRAYER

*Almighty God, you know our hearts and you know what we need to hear. Use your Word to cut through our sin and to heal us with your beautiful gospel. Give us humility, trust, and understanding as we listen to you and learn of your powerful grace and forgiveness. Amen.*

### | READ IT THROUGH (Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)

<sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup>But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” <sup>3</sup>Then Jesus told them this parable:

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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. <sup>21</sup>The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup>For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup>Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup>So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup>‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup>The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup>‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup>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.’ ”

## | DIG IN DEEPER

- *To whom did Jesus tell this parable? Why does it matter?*
  
- *What was so bothersome to the Pharisees about these people who were gathering to hear Jesus?*
  
- *Consider the characters in the parable Jesus tells. If you had to describe each character with a short summary, what would it be?*
  - **The Father**
  
  - **The Younger Son**
  
  - **The Elder Son**
  
- *What parallels can you draw between the characters in the parable and the audience to whom Jesus speaks?*
  
- *Read another of Jesus' parables below. What connection does it have to the parable in Luke 15?*

### **Matthew 21:31**

<sup>28</sup>“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’ <sup>29</sup>‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. <sup>30</sup>“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

<sup>31</sup>“Which of the two did what his father wanted?” “The first,” they answered. Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. <sup>32</sup>For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”

## | TAKE IT HOME

- *Have you seen both religious and irreligious lifestyles lead to spiritual emptiness? Share some examples.*
  
- *Are we or is our church reaching out to the broken and marginalized in our society? In what ways does our answer to this question shape the form of our ministry?*
  
- $\chi\alpha\rho\eta\nu\alpha\iota \ \xi\delta\epsilon\iota$  = “it is necessary to rejoice” *What do these words say about us and our congregation?*

## | CLOSING PRAYER

# The PRODIGAL GOD

## PART 3 – *The Point*

### | OPENING PRAYER

*Almighty God, you reveal yourself as the one who loves us and desires to show mercy. Teach us of our great need for that mercy, and then implant your grace deep in our hearts so that we have the daily comfort of forgiveness, the consistent joy of new life in you, and the eternal peace of our home in heaven. Amen.*

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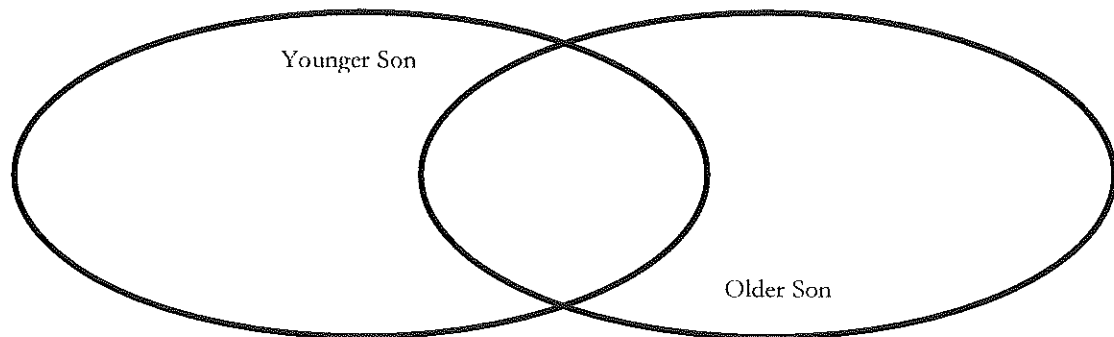
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## DIG IN DEEPER

- Take a few moments to write down some characteristics of each brother in the circles below.



- How might the older brother's attitude have made it difficult for the younger brother to come home?
- In what ways were both sons attempting to control God through their obedience? Do you think such views are common today?
- What does this parable teach us about how God defines sin? What does it teach us about how we understand God's grace?
- In this parable, how does the father demonstrate his "initiating" love with both of his sons?
- Connect the following Bible passages to this parable:

**Isaiah 42:3-4** – "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."

**Luke 5:31-32** – Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

## TAKE IT HOME

- Agree or Disagree: "A Christian repents also of the reasons he bad for doing anything right."
- Agree or Disagree: "Forgiveness always comes at a cost."
- Agree or Disagree: "The default of the human heart is religion."
- For what reasons is the picture of a feast such a beautiful picture of heaven?

## CLOSING PRAYER