

The Parable of the Prodigal Son



Luke 15:11-32

The Lord Jesus told a parable of a man who had two sons. One day the younger son asked for his share of the inheritance. When he had squandered it all in a strange country, he regretted it. He returned to his father and offered to work for him. His father was so overjoyed at seeing him again that he ordered a feast to celebrate his homecoming. The older brother was very annoyed. He felt slighted. His father explained to him: "Everything I have is yours. You should be joyful because your brother was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found."

The children learn that God's love and the love of Jesus holds true for sinners too.

A

father has two sons. He loves them both very much. They live together and are in need of nothing. One evening the younger son is standing in front of the house looking out into the far distance. He thinks: "It must be beautiful out there. I want to see a bit of the world." He goes to his father and says: "Father, give me my share of the property--my inheritance. I want to leave." The father is taken aback--he is worried and tries to change his son's mind. But his son remains adamant. So the father gives him his share of the inheritance and the son turns it into cash. He takes the money and sets off on his travels. His father looks after him sadly. He hopes that he will soon return.

The son travels to a strange country. With his father's money he can afford many luxuries. He soon finds friends and together they squander his money. He buys them gifts. Life is wonderful! But soon his money starts running out. His friends leave him. He is forced to sell his beautiful clothes, his ring and everything he carries with him. But the money he gets for all these things does not last long either. A famine aggravates the situation.

Alone, sad and hungry he arrives at a farm. He asks whether the farmer needs a hand. He sends him to tend the pigs. The young man gets very little to eat and wears torn and dirty clothing. He is so hungry that he would eat the bean pods which the pigs are fed with, but even that the farmer denies him. He

is now rock-bottom. In his misery he does not know what to do next. He is desperate ...

2

Then he thinks of his father. Oh, how wonderful it was at home! He thinks: "All my father's servants have more than they can eat, and here I am about to starve. I will go back to my father and say to him: I am very sorry. I have behaved badly and I have hurt you. I no longer deserve to be your son. Let me work for you as a servant."

So he sets off to return to his father. When he is still quite a distance away, his father sees him already. He recognizes him despite his shabby appearance. Joyfully he hurries out to meet him and embraces and kisses him. Then the son says: "Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I no longer deserve to be your son." But his father calls a servant. He instructs him to fetch the best robe for his son, has a ring put on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then he has a prize calf slaughtered for a feast in celebration of his son's return. Joyfully he tells everyone: "My son has returned! He was lost, but now he has been found. Let's celebrate."

3

The older son is still working in the field. He comes home in the evening, and as he approaches the house, he hears music. He sees that the house is all lit up. "Are we having a feast?" he asks one of the servants he meets. The servant explains that his brother has returned home in good health

Jesus is our Saviour and Redeemer

and that this is the reason for the celebration. The older son is annoyed and he clearly shows his annoyance. He does not want to join in this celebration. He turns round and is just about to walk away when his father comes out and puts a hand on his shoulder. He says lovingly: "Come and rejoice with me that your brother has returned." But the son replies: "All these years I have worked hard for you. What have I

received for that? You have never prepared a feast for me. My brother wasted his money, he comes back like a beggar and you prepare a feast for him!?" The father continues to look kindly at his eldest son and says: "My son, you have always been with me. Everything I have is yours. I love you just as much. Be happy with me! Your brother was lost and now he has been found."

4/5



With a parable the Lord Jesus illustrated that the love of God is for everyone, also the lost ones. He related: 'A father had two sons. The younger one asked for his inheritance and went away. He spent everything he had. He suffered hunger and had to tend the pigs. He came to his senses and returned home. The father welcomed him home and prepared a feast for him.'

- 1** We repeat the first lesson. The Lord Jesus told his listeners another story about something which was lost. A kindly father exemplifies therein the great love God has for sinners.
- 2** How does the son feel? What is he thinking? (He thinks of his home, of his wish to get away, of his friends... He changes his attitude. He regrets what he has done. He decides to go back.)
- 3** We look at and describe the picture. What is meant by the father's statement: "My son has returned. He was lost, but now he has been found?" (The father feared that he would not see his son again. But now he has returned. The father's joy is indescribable.) What will the other son say about the return of his brother?
- 4** Jesus Christ concludes his story here. He leaves the older son's future behaviour to the listeners' imagination. What should he have done? (rejoiced too, joined in the celebration...)
- 5** What does the Lord Jesus want to bring home to his listeners with this parable? (God's love and the love of Jesus is also for the lost ones, those who have done wrong. If they turn to God and repent, he rejoices. He receives them in love. Others should rejoice at this too. His love is for them as well.) We look at the photograph.