



Study Guide

Summer 2012 Sermon/Study Series

www.rbcpc.org/prodigoal-party

“The Prodigal Party”

Week #2

July 14/15, 2012

The Prodigal Younger Son

Next week: July 21/22 – The Prodigal Older Brother

Scripture Reference
Prodigal Party Series – Week #2
“The Prodigal Younger Son”

Read and reflect on the following scripture:

Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25

Notes:

Luke 15:11-24

Notes:

Psalms 139

Notes:

Galatians 4:7

Notes:

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Scripture

Luke 15:1-2

1. Recall from last weeks study - Who is Jesus addressing?
2. These sinners and tax collectors... they are saturated in a Jewish culture centered around Judaism. Imagine that. The majority of these hearers have been raised in a society that worshipped Yahweh, celebrated all the Jewish festivals, and even raised their children up according to the Torah. These sinners and tax collectors knew very well about Yahweh, the Father God of the Holy Scriptures... How does that impact your understanding of the younger son leaving and returning to the Father's house?

Proverbs 14:12 & 16:25

1. Does this warning pertain to the Christian as well as the non-believer?
2. Even as a Christian with salvation, can we choose to wander from God? In what ways do we do this?

Luke 15:11-24

1. Why do you think the younger son left?
2. What are the differences between a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost boy?

Sermon

1. In what ways is your heart prone to wander? In what ways, even as a believer, can we leave the Father's house in search of attaining life to the full... choosing a way that seems right to us, but in the end it leads to.....?
2. *Historically, applying this parable to believers has been deemed heretical. Tertullian was an early Christian writer from the second and third century. He has been called the “Father of Western Theology”, a great early church leader and theological mind.*

“Tertullian, insisted that this parable of the prodigal son must never apply to Christians. If it did, he said, then not only “adulterers and fornicators” but also “idolaters, blasphemers, and renegades” would use the parable to pardon their sin. “Who will worry about losing what can so easily be regained?” he asked, and others agreed with him.

Novatian, a third century contemporary of Tertullian, allowed that while God certainly had the power to forgive denial of faith, the church should not re-admit them to the body of Christ without a long and public period of humiliation. If the church really was Christ’s body, Novatian reasoned, then it was supposed to be without sin. To welcome a tainted person back into fellowship was to defile the whole body.

This message rings aloud still today in a postmodern world that feels they aren’t welcome in a holy and judgmental institution. We can see here that we start to get into the Religious older brother mindset... stay tuned, next week Neal goes to the older brother, and it will be challenging. ‘Cause right next to the rebel in us, we’ve got some religious older brother stuff going on too.

However, there were many Christians who disagreed. Gregory of Nazianus, great theologian in the fourth century, attacked this perspective:

In response, Gregory said, “Do you not accept repentance?” “Do you not shed a tear of mercy? I hope you may not encounter such a judge as yourself!” “You sound as if you yourself were not made of flesh and blood”, Gregory stated. “Come on; stand here on our side, on the side of human beings.”

After reading the perspectives of Tertullian, Novatian, and Gregory of Nazianus, in what ways to agree/disagree with them?

*Important cultural context here - they were concerned about Christians denying their faith to avoid persecution and even death from the Roman empire. Would they have allowed the the Apostle Peter back into the fold after he denied Christ three times? (Luke 22:54-62) How did Jesus respond to Peter? If Judas repented after he had betrayed Jesus, what do you think the outcome would’ve been?

3. This younger, wasteful, wandering, rebellious, prodigal son began in his father’s house, decided to take off on his own, and once life crashed he returned to his father. Spiritually, what do you think is going on here? Discuss “coming to his senses”.
4. Read Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139, and Matthew 6:25-31
You were created in the Image of God.
You are fearfully and wonderfully made.
You are known and loved intimately.

Do these truths apply to all humanity, or just believers?
What gets you into the Father's extravagant party?
Where is repentance and humility for this son?

5. Yeah, a lot of Scripture in this study, but Scripture interprets Scripture; invest in it. If you have the time, compare this Prodigal Party that both sons were invited to (only one attends where Jesus leaves the story), compare it to Luke 14:15-23. This is another Prodigal Party that Jesus shared just a few paragraphs earlier than the prodigal son story.
Who goes to the Prodigal Party - the Kingdom of God feast?
6. Galatians 4:6-7. Apply this to the son, and yourself.

Life Application

Our intended identity as a child of God is *actualized* when we are in relationship and close proximity to the father, but we can choose another life away... His kids have freedom to choose. How is the position of your heart towards God? Facing away? Facing towards? Our humble heart posture of facing towards the father is what brings you into his Prodigal Party. Turning *from* our own way that seemed right, turning *towards* the life we were made for which is in relationship with Him... that is life to the full... that is the Kingdom of God where you thrive. It is with Jesus, who is one with the Father, that you experience abundant life:

From John 10 (remember, the first lost parable was about sheep)-

Jesus told this simple story, but they had no idea what he was talking about. So he tried again. "I'll be explicit, then. I am the Gate for the sheep. All those others are up to no good—sheep stealers, every one of them. But the sheep didn't listen to them. I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of... My sheep recognize my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them real and eternal life. They are protected from the Destroyer for good. No one can steal them from out of my hand. The Father who put them under my care is so much greater than the Destroyer and Thief. No one could ever get them away from him. I and the Father are one heart and mind."

Prayer

Father God,
In humility, may we turn our hearts towards the you and journey into your wide-open arms of love and compassion. May we enter into the life that you have planned for us by being so close to Jesus that we recognize his voice, his leading, and his party. May

our life with Jesus have the attraction of a party to all those around us that are lonely, hurting, and searching for life. Father, may we live in, experience, and be an invitation to your Kingdom, your prodigal party. Amen!