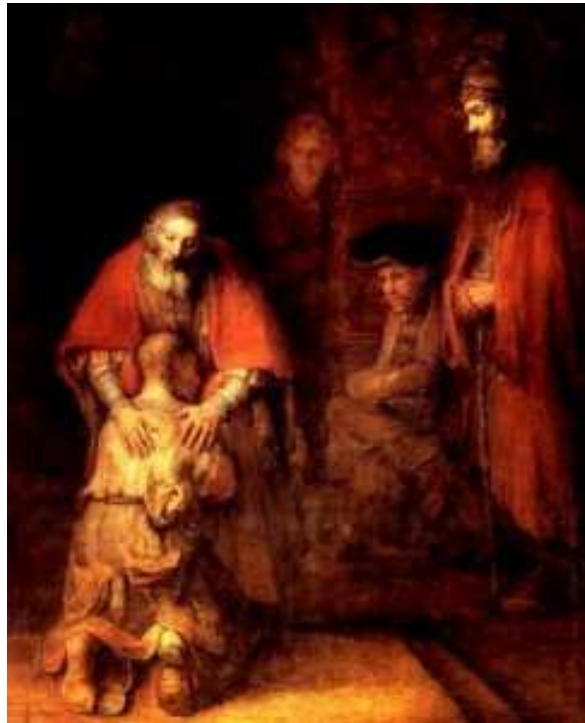


Sunday 28 February 2010
© usbc.org.uk 2010

The Return of the Prodigal Son



You & the Older Son

If words like impetuous, impertinent, selfish, spoilt, are some of the words that could be used to describe the younger son in this story that Jesus tells in Luke 15.11-32; what words would you use to describe the older son?

As you look once again at Rembrandt's painting how do you see this older son portrayed.

These are the words from Jesus to describe him.

²⁵The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?"

²⁷The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." ²⁸The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. ²⁹But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. ³⁰This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

³¹His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

If the parable tells us about homecoming – then the older son is not at home in his home v29. For him life is about duty not delight. You don't sense any love loss between the older son and the Father as far as the older son is concerned.

The words that loom large to describe him and his attitude from my perception are resentment, bitterness, jealousy, anger and possibly hate.. There could well be others.

But first a testimony from Ann Davis.

That has been Ann's experience and possibly others here know something of this.

Surely we know too something of these destructive attitudes.

Resentment – arising from a sense of unfairness, he the eldest son having to get on with the family business and the younger son his brother but not referred to in that way (“*This other son of yours your son*” v30) getting his inheritance early and then just going away to gentileland and blowing it all.

Bitterness- you can imagine this older son spitting out these words and this resentment has grown into a root of bitterness. His younger brother has returned in a very sad state, he’s wasted his money and rather than his Father giving him a hard time he was throwing a party, if he had seen his Father running out to meet him the mind boggles at his response. Rather than just quietly letting him back into the family, the father along with others they were celebrating - music dancing and the barbecued calf.

Jealousy – the older son is certainly jealous of the party when he not been able to celebrate with his friends (why was this – was it his perception of his father rather than the reality of what he was truly like. At a deeper level he could well be jealous of the maverick nature of his brother and how he had been away and had a good time even if now it had got desperate for him.

Linked in with this is anger that borders on hate – whether he had ever had a good relationship with his younger brother we do not know. It clearly seems that this older brother would not have minded if he brother never came back maybe he didn’t even care whether he was alive.

It is significant that there are 270 references in the bible to the word anger and 128 references to hate.

The bible speaks of the importance of not being resentful 2 Timothy 2.24, and in Ephesians 4.31 Paul writes

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice."

For Rembrandt – he knew something of what it was like to be the older son. Rembrandt was not an easy person to get along with. He lived with a lady Geertje Dircx for six years and after this he got his brother to collect testimony from her neighbours so that she could be admitted into a mental institution. When later she could have been released from the institution Rembrandt again got evidence to keep her within there. (Henri Nouwen p65). The biography written by Gary Schwartz describes Rembrandt as a “bitter, revengeful person who used all permissible and impermissible weapons to attack those who came in his way”.

For the author of the book “The Return of the Prodigal Son Henri Nouwen Thinking of the younger son and the older son writes:
“ Looking deeply into myself and then around me at the lives of others, I wonder which does more damage lust or resentment?

There is so much resentment among the "just" and the "righteous". There is much judgment. Condemnation and prejudice among the "saints". There is much frozen anger among the people who are concerned about avoiding "sin". (Neuwen p71)

So we too can perhaps there is something of the older brother within us all. The older brother who despite the father urging him to come in and celebrate that his brother who was lost had been found. So what can be done to help the older son change his attitude and be able to celebrate with the others. There is a need to let go of rivalry – of seeing that we are in competition with others.

Nouwen provides some helpful keys to opening this door.

"Radical Trust" – the kind of trust that says I need to embrace "the truth that God does indeed want to embrace me as much as he does my wayward brothers and sisters" p84.

"Gratitude" – being disciplined to be grateful even when emotions still feel hurt and resentful.

"Courage" – this is not easy path to travel, entering into the father's House is not so easy especially when we do not perceive it as our own. A change of mind, a change of heart needs to take place before the journey can take place.

This is possible only when like the older son we are willing to accept that we are our father's son/daughter and that we too shall have our share of the inheritance as children of our heavenly Father

Finally remember the words of Jesus from John 14.1-3

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ² There is more than enough room in my Father's home.^[a] If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?^[b] ³ When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am."

2 Timothy 2:24

And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not **resentful**. 2 Timothy 2.4

Ephesians 4:31 (New International Version - UK)

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Ephesians 4:26 (New International Version - UK)

²⁶ In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,

The Story of the Lost Son

¹¹⁻¹² Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.'

¹²⁻¹⁶ So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any. ¹⁷⁻²⁰ That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father. ²⁰⁻²¹ When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.' ²²⁻²⁴ But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time. ²⁵⁻²⁷ All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on.

He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.' ²⁸⁻³⁰"The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!' ³¹⁻³²"His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'" The Message

Luke 15

Luke 15

New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

View commentary related to this passage

Luke 15

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering round to hear him.

² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, This man welcomes sinners, and eats with them.

³ Then Jesus told them this parable:

⁴ Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders

⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'

⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and

says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'

¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus continued: There was a man who had two sons.

¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no-one gave him anything.

¹⁷ 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!

¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

²⁰ 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.

²¹ The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² 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.'

²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.

²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.

²⁹ 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.'

³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.'

³² 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.'

The Message (MSG)

View commentary related to this passage

Luke 15

The Story of the Lost Sheep

¹⁻³By this time a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends." Their grumbling triggered this story.

⁴⁻⁷"Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, 'Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!' Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.

The Story of the Lost Coin

⁸⁻¹⁰"Or imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and scour the house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it? And when she finds it you can be sure she'll call her friends and neighbors: 'Celebrate with me! I found my lost coin!' Count on it—that's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God."

The Story of the Lost Son

¹¹⁻¹²Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.'

¹²⁻¹⁶"So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in

the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

17-20"That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father.

20-21"When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

22-24"But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time.

25-27"All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.'

28-30"The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!'

31-32"His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had

to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!"

The Message (MSG)

Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson

New Living Translation (NLT)

View commentary related to this passage

Luke 15

Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹ Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. ² This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

³ So Jesus told them this story: ⁴ "If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. ⁶ When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!

Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins^[a] and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.' ¹⁰ In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents."

Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. ¹² The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

¹³ "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴ About the

time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵ He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"

²⁰ "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹ His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'^[b]'

²² "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³ And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, ²⁶ and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'

²⁸ "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹ but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰ Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes,

you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

³¹ “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³² We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

Footnotes:

- a. Luke 15:8 Greek *ten drachmas*. A drachma was the equivalent of a full day’s wage.
- b. Luke 15:21 Some manuscripts add *Please take me on as a hired servant*.

New Living Translation (NLT)

Holy Bible. New Living Translation copyright © 1996, 2004 by Tyndale Charitable Trust. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers.



Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Listen to this passage
View commentary related to this passage

Luke 15

One Sheep

(Matthew 18.12-14)

¹Tax collectors ^[a] and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. ²So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them." ³Then Jesus told them this story:

⁴If any of you has a hundred sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the ninety-nine in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? ⁵And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder ⁶and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends

and neighbors and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep."

⁷Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to."

One Coin

⁸Jesus told the people another story:

What will a woman do if she has ten silver coins and loses one of them? Won't she light a lamp, sweep the floor, and look carefully until she finds it?

⁹Then she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found the coin I lost."

¹⁰Jesus said, "In the same way God's angels are happy when even one person turns to him."

Two Sons

¹¹Jesus also told them another story:

Once a man had two sons. ¹²The younger son said to his father, "Give me my share of the property." So the father divided his property between his two sons.

¹³Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

¹⁵He went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of his pigs. ^[b] ¹⁶He would have been glad to eat what the pigs were eating, ^[c] but no one gave him a thing. ¹⁷Finally, he came to his senses and said, "My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am, starving to

death! ¹⁸I will go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. ¹⁹I am no longer good enough to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.'

²⁰The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

²¹The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God in heaven and against you. I am no longer good enough to be called your son."

²²But his father said to the servants, "Hurry and bring the best clothes and put them on him. Give him a ring for his finger and sandals ^[d] for his feet.

²³Get the best calf and prepare it, so we can eat and celebrate. ²⁴This son of mine was dead, but has now come back to life. He was lost and has now been found." And they began to celebrate. ²⁵The older son had been out in the field. But when he came near the house, he heard the music and dancing. ²⁶So he called one of the servants over and asked, "What's going on here?"

²⁷The servant answered, "Your brother has come home safe and sound, and your father ordered us to kill the best calf." ²⁸The older brother got so angry that he would not even go into the house.

His father came out and begged him to go in. ²⁹But he said to his father, "For years I have worked for you like a slave and have always obeyed you. But you have never even given me a little goat, so that I could give a dinner for my friends. ³⁰This other son of yours wasted your money on prostitutes. And now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf to be killed for a feast."

³¹His father replied, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³²But we should be glad and celebrate! Your brother was dead, but he is now alive. He was lost and has now been found."

Footnotes:

- a. Luke 15:1 *Tax collectors*: See the note at 3.12.
- b. Luke 15:15 *pigs*: The Jewish religion taught that pigs were not fit to eat or even to touch. A Jewish man would have felt terribly insulted if he had to feed pigs, much less eat with them.
- c. Luke 15:16 *what the pigs were eating*: The Greek text has " (bean) pods," which came from a tree in Palestine. These were used to feed animals. Poor people sometimes ate them too.
- d. Luke 15:22 *ring. . . sandals*: These show that the young man's father fully accepted him as his son. A ring was a sign of high position in the family. Sandals showed that he was a son instead of a slave, since slaves did not usually wear sandals.

Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society

Amplified Bible (AMP)

View commentary related to this passage

Luke 15

¹NOW THE tax collectors and [notorious and ^[a]especially wicked] sinners were all coming near to [Jesus] to listen to Him.

²And the Pharisees and the scribes kept muttering and indignantly complaining, saying, This man accepts and receives and welcomes [^[b]preeminently wicked] sinners and eats with them.

³So He told them this parable:

⁴What man of you, if he has a hundred sheep and should lose one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness (desert) and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his [own] shoulders, rejoicing.

⁶And when he gets home, he summons together [his] friends and [his] neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep which was lost.

⁷Thus, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one [^[c]especially] wicked person who repents (^[d]changes his mind, abhorring his errors and misdeeds, and determines to enter upon a better course of life) than over ninety-nine righteous persons who have no need of repentance.

⁸Or what woman, having ten [silver] drachmas [each one equal to a day's wages], if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and look carefully and diligently until she finds it?

⁹And when she has found it, she summons her [women] friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the silver coin which I had lost.

¹⁰Even so, I tell you, there is joy among and in the presence of the angels of God over one [^[e]especially] wicked person who repents (^[f]changes his mind for the better, heartily amending his ways, with abhorrence of his past sins).

¹¹And He said, There was a certain man who had two sons;

¹²And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the part of the property that falls [to me]. And he divided the estate between them.^(A)

¹³And not many days after that, the younger son gathered up all that he had and journeyed into a distant country, and there he wasted his fortune in reckless and loose [from restraint] living.

¹⁴And when he had spent all he had, a [^[g]mighty] famine came upon that country, and he began to fall behind and be in want.

¹⁵So he went and forced (glued) himself upon one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed hogs.

¹⁶And he would gladly have fed on and [^[h]filled] his belly with the [^[i]carob] pods that the hogs were eating, but [they could not satisfy his hunger and]

nobody gave him anything [better].^(B)

¹⁷Then when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father have enough food, and [even food] to spare, but I am perishing (dying) here of hunger!

¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.

¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; [just] make me like one of your hired servants.

²⁰So he got up and came to his [own] father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity and tenderness [for him]; and he ran and embraced him and kissed him [^[j]fervently].

²¹And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son [I no longer deserve to be recognized as a son of yours]!

²²But the father said to his bond servants, Bring quickly the best robe (the festive robe of honor) and put it on him; and give him a ring for his hand and sandals for his feet.^(C)

²³And bring out [^[k]that [wheat-]fatted calf and kill it; and let us [^[l]revel and feast and be happy and make merry,

²⁴Because this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found! And they began to [^[m]revel and feast and make merry.

²⁵But his older son was in the field; and as he returned and came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

²⁶And having called one of the servant [boys] to him, he began to ask what this meant.

²⁷And he said to him, Your brother has come, and your father has killed

^[n]that [wheat-]fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and well.

²⁸But [the elder brother] was angry [with deep-seated wrath] and resolved not to go in. Then his father came out and began to plead with him,

²⁹But he answered his father, Look! These many years I have served you, and I have never disobeyed your command. Yet you never gave me [so much as] a [little] kid, that I might ^[o]revel and feast and be happy and make merry with my friends;

³⁰But when this son of yours arrived, who has devoured your estate with immoral women, you have killed for him ^[p]that [wheat-] fattened calf!

³¹And the father said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

³²But it was fitting to make merry, to ^[q]revel and feast and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!

My name is Abbot Joseph. I am the superior of Holy Transfiguration Monastery (aka Mt Tabor Monastery), a Byzantine-rite Ukrainian Catholic monastic community in Redwood Valley, CA. I have been a monk for over 25 years and a priest for nearly 17.

Sons and Daughters

I have been lately re-reading Henri Nouwen's *Return of the Prodigal Son*, and it seems that the moment for this is right at last. I read it once about ten years ago, and though I was edified by it, I think I was not in an interior spiritual "place" wherein I could fully benefit from its insights. Through my present reading (which so far is only the first few chapters) and prayer, a little more of the light of Heaven has shone upon me, and I'd like to share some of that with you. Perhaps much of what I say is not news to you, and you've been living it for years, but for someone who often wrestles with God as I do, it is something through which the Lord "gives me rest" (see my previous post).

I'm not sure even how to begin this, but perhaps I'll just say that if you have ever been a sinner you ought to read this book. It is not an exegetical commentary on the Gospel parable, though it does offer insights into the text itself. It is more a glimpse into the Heart of the Father and the tragedy/salvation of the son, and as such it is the story of our own life and relation to God. The return of prodigal sons and daughters, and the compassionate embrace of their loving Father, can perhaps be summed up in this line from the prologue of the book: "I have to kneel before the Father, put my ear against his chest and listen, without interruption, to the heartbeat of God."