

The Merciful Father

Happy Wednesday!

“And He said, “A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them. And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.”’ So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And 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.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly 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 fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.”

Luke 15:11-24 NASB1995

<https://bible.com/bible/100/luk.15.11-23.NASB1995> [bible.com]

My Bible translation calls this passage “The Prodigal Son,” but since those headings aren’t in the original writings of Scripture, I recommend we consider changing this title to “The Merciful Father.”

Growing up, I always read this passage as an outsider looking in on a family that was dysfunctional in some way. I didn’t find a character who was like me, so it was easy to disconnect from reality and observe their relationship, so to speak.

The Truth is, we are all the prodigal sons at some point in our lives, and some of us are prodigals over and over again: coming “back to God” when things are hard, and leaving God when a “better” (more tempting) offer comes along.

The Truth is: this story isn’t only about the son realizing he needs God (the Father) and repenting. It’s more importantly a description of WHAT GOD IS LIKE toward every person who turns from their own ways toward HIM: merciful.

You may have been taught that God is watching you, waiting for you to screw up so He can blast lightning bolts from the sky at you and take away all that’s good in your life - that God shames you or is ashamed of you. I wouldn’t worship a “told you so” God, and I praise the Lord that He is NOT like that!

Look at the father in this parable:

“But while (the wayward son) was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And 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.’ But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly 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 fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.”

Luke 15:24 NASB1995

God sees our hearts change.

This father watched for his son to return.

God watches over you for your good and not for your harm.

This father celebrated his son’s reconciliation to the family.

God celebrates your reconciliation to Him. “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Luke 15:7 NASB1995

When Jesus spoke this parable, cultures were different. It was a societal sin to turn away from your family. And if a wayward child *tried* to return to their family, their community would stone them to death on behalf of the family they left behind! But THIS merciful father rights his wrongs and cancels the opportunity for his son to be stoned. He immediately hugs his son and invites the people who were going to stone his son to a party to celebrate his son! “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...” Psalms 23:5a NASB1995

Moreover, it was a shame and an embarrassment to show your ankles - modesty was important (midriffs were definitely out of the question!), but this father embarrassed himself even further by showing his ankles as he ran to redeem and rescue his son.

Notice again how he receives his son - no “I told you so,” no “was I right?” And no “I knew you’d be back. Don’t forget to apologize for the way you walked off.” No. The merciful father brought garments of authority, his robe and his ring, and gave his son a position in the family of trust and of authority. He didn’t even bother to clean off the pig slop first!

The Father is merciful - your Heavenly Father - does not desire to hold you in the darkness of your sin, but desires to wrap His arms around you and celebrate your return to Him.

His mercies are new every morning. The Lord God is merciful. Be on your guard, there will come a day when He is the Judge. “For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.”

Matthew 24:44 NASB1995

Father we praise You for You are the merciful Father. Reveal any lies about You that we've believed, and show us Your glory and Who You truly are. Help the seed of Your living word fall afresh in our hearts and let it find good ground to take root and be established like a mighty oak.
Amen

Worship:

"Greater Still" by Brandon Lake <https://youtu.be/-0Zrn1o0VXY?si=aN4mqVfwVqAa3xAz>

"Friend in Jesus" by CAIN <https://youtu.be/CwWOWgmdcxY?si=pdfLpUZ2hp7Aaq0S>
[\[youtu.be\]](#)

"Pieces" by Stefany Gretzinger https://youtu.be/VFnNz_ugefc?si=AGmXUX-6kPV1mtJV
[\[youtu.be\]](#)

"How can it be" by Lauren Daigle <https://youtu.be/Wt5X91ciE6Y?si=oGREEFRqIJob-Fx6>
[\[youtu.be\]](#)

Brittany Laing