

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Luke 15:11-32

And he said, A certain man had two sons: And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.(KJV)

The present Gospel is proclaimed each year as Great Lent draws near. Believers are encouraged to return to God. The Gospel intends for believers to come to themselves, to repent of sins and to cease wasting life's blessings.

Honesty is required to admit personal sins. A careful look at personal life reveals the failure to fully use life's blessings in God-pleasing ways. Every believer is a prodigal son or daughter able to benefit from this Gospel lesson.

Serious examination of the heart, mind and soul reveals the great distance existing between the God-pleasing life and the actual life lived. God welcomes believers repenting and choosing to begin life anew in Christ.

Returning prodigal sons and daughters experience God's love and joy. Accounts of returning prodigal sons and daughters through the centuries serve as proof of God's immeasurable and constant love.

Skepticism of God's welcoming love and acceptance is overcome by turning to God in repentance. God knows when the heart, mind and soul sincerely desire change and are ready for God.

When life feels like a mess and broken, it is time to return to God. The Psalmist said: “a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” (Ps.50/51:17) Faith, trust and courage are necessary to return to God.

God’s welcoming love is reassured in the present Gospel. The loving father welcomes the returning son. St. Luke’s Gospel records the joy in heaven when a sinner repents. (Lk.15:7)

The Lord Jesus Christ said: “I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.” (Jn.10:10) The abundant life originates and continues in Jesus Christ.

Believers take up the abundant life at Holy Baptism. Sin creeps into life following Baptism either intentionally or inadvertently. The solution to sin is to repent and return to the life in Jesus Christ.

The Church offers the way of repentance. The Church teaches the way to remain united with Jesus Christ. The account of the prodigal son is proof that believers need not remain in despair.

Jesus Christ is the way out of despair. Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth and the life.” (Jn.14:6) Jesus is ever-present for believers. Jesus Christ is present in the hardest and most difficult moments of life.

It is best to try to always remain in Christ and to live in ways pleasing to Christ. Even with best efforts, believers will fall into sin. With Jesus Christ’s help, believers recover from sin and grow in Christ.

Believers choosing to continue to live in Jesus Christ take the lesson of the prodigal son to heart. Serious believers hearing this Gospel lesson seek to be fully reunited with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faithful believers want always to live fully in Christ. Sin and distance from Jesus Christ have no acceptable part in the life of faithful believers. Constant unity with Jesus Christ is the desired goal.

Hunger in the soul yearns for constant unity with Jesus Christ. The prodigal son recognized the hunger in his soul. He recognized hunger for the life with his father.

The Church provides the nourishment necessary for the soul’s hunger. The Church offers the Gospel and the Precious Body and Blood of Jesus Christ to the believer. Wise believers heed the lesson of the prodigal son and return to God.

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son. Holy Apostles, Archippus, Philemon and Apphia. February 19/March 3, 2024. Hidden Valley, Pennsylvania. Father Rodney Torbic