

Three Prodigal Lessons This Christmas

Did you know the word “prodigal” translates more accurately as “extravagant” than as “late or tardy”?

One of my all time favorite parables is the story of the prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-32). There are so many tremendous lessons to be learned from this parable, very few of which we think of at Christmas. But far more than what we often see under the tree, this story shows us true extravagance!

Here are three prodigal lessons to take with you this season:

First of all, the younger son’s actions are to be commended.

Sound strange?

I’m not referring to the fact that he took his inheritance and squandered it. Rather, I applaud the fact that after his downward spiral, he recognized the sorry state he was in. The Scriptures say “he came to his senses” (v. 17), which literally means he stood outside of himself and saw himself for what he was.

Jesus tells us: “He got up” (v. 20). In other words, he owned his condition. He didn’t try to blame his father, brother, or society. He took responsibility. He was prepared to confess and accept the consequences, even though he was very cognizant of the fact that it was going to be a rough road back. What a major growth step we make when we take ownership!

In law, as in all of life, this attitude is not that common. Many people whose lives become derailed are unable to move on in a healthy way because it is too easy to play the blame game. May you and I have the courage to “get up” the same way as this young man, dismiss the pity party, go to the Father, confess, and come home.

Secondly, have a look at the actions of the older brother. Notice what Scripture says about him: “he would not go in” (v. 28).

What a sad testimony! There was a party going on to celebrate his brother’s return, but pride and anger kept him on the outside. How I pray that during this holiday season we will be humbled by the love of God to go into His presence and enjoy all that he has to offer us!

How will this happen? It will take the releasing of control. The older brother was not prepared to do that. He thought he had the exclusive love of his father and the power over the estate as sole heir. In his mind, it was all his. Remember, intimacy is always the first casualty when there is a need for control. Do any of us struggle with control issues, in our professional, familial, or church life?

Finally, let's consider the actions of the father, for this story is really more about him than the two boys. Consider with me his deliberate moves: his father sees him from afar and has compassion on him. He runs to his son, hugs him, kisses him, and listens to him.

It has been suggested that the kisses were a way of saying "Son! It doesn't matter! You are back, that is all I care about." In other words, "Stop talking!"

Then Jesus says the father did five things: he put the best robe on his son (no time to bother with a shower!); put a ring on his finger (filthy finger nails notwithstanding); put shoes on his feet; killed a prized calf; and threw a party.

Was not the father's love truly extravagant towards his boys? During this Christmas season, embrace and experience the Father's extravagant love. He has showered so much upon us with the gift of His Son.

Have a praise filled Christmas and Blessed New Year.

In His Love,
Chaplain Reid