

# The Prodigal Son

by Ray Greenly

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*The story of the prodigal son teaches us about the importance of repentance and coming under the covenant of the family, which involves sacrifice and hard work, but also intimacy and relationship with God.*

**Duration:** 29:00

**Scripture:** Isaiah 55:1-2, Matthew 6:33, Luke 6:6-10, Luke 15:11-32, Acts 2:42-47

**Topics:** "Prodigal"

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## Description

In this sermon, pastors Ray and Jan Greenlee discuss the story of the prodigal son and its connection to money. They emphasize that the covenant between the father and his sons is based on fellowship and prosperity for the common good. The sermon highlights the importance of working for the good of the family and the kingdom of God, through fasting, prayer, giving, reading the Word, and testifying. The prodigal son's journey from squandering his wealth to working in a pig pen serves as a lesson on the importance of humility and submission to God.

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## Transcript

Come, all who are thirsty, come to the waters. And you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me, hear me, that your soul may live. Welcome to Springs of Living Water with Pastors Ray and Jan Greenlee.

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them, and not long after that, the younger son got together all he had.

He set off for a distant country, and there squandered his wealth in wild living. And after he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in the whole country. And he found just the right job, and prospered greatly in the famine.

So he went out and hired others to work for him, and became the president of his own company. He fed on the best of the land, and had others feeding his pigs. Would he have ever gone home? This young man insults his father by saying, you are dead to me, give me my share of the estate.

He spoke to the father as one would speak to the executor of the will. So for him, father was dead. He took his share, went off to a far land.

He could have been very successful, and lived the rest of his life in that far land. He could have been his own boss. He could have run his own affairs.

He could have come and gone as he wished. He could have ordered his servants to do as he bid them do. But in the mercy of God, he lost everything.

Now because we're Americans, we want to be successful in everything we put our hand to. But if we're successful in all that we put our hand to, we will never come to our senses. It is the mercy of God that does not allow success to come until we have fully come to our senses.

And so as we look at this story, he's insulted his father. He's left home, so he is no longer under the covenant of the family. Understand what the covenant of the family is? It's a farm life.

That means when you get up in the morning and you have your meal, you leave then and you go out to work in whatever is necessary for the prosperity of the farm, not for your prosperity. It means you're going to take care of the goats. You're going to take care of the cattle.

The livestock has to be cared for. You are going to milk at 5:30 in the morning, whether it's hot or cold. You're going to go out in the night and you're going to birth the calves.

And when they have trouble, you're going to deliver that calf in some very unpleasant ways. You will smell like cow or goat or sheep. You are a part of the family covenant.

Every member is necessary in order to provide for the livelihood of the whole family. So you care for your responsibilities. You have your disciplines.

You engage in those day after day. That's what the older brother was saying. Now it's possible to be a part of the covenant of the family and be angry about it.

But even if you're angry about it, the security is the family and the financial base is the family. It's not you. You participate in what the family covenant calls you to do.

And this young man said, I'm tired of taking care of sheep. I'm tired of taking care of goats. I don't like getting up at 5:30 in the morning and milking.

I don't like cleaning out the stalls. I don't like this farm life. I'm headed to the city.

I'm going to have a lifestyle. And so off he goes to the city and he has his wild parties. He can stay up all night.

He can sleep all day. He can do anything he wants to do. In the midst of all of that corruption, the Lord says a famine came.

We always want to say it's the devil who brings the famine. It's not. God brings the famine to bring us to our senses, so that we'll understand what's important and what isn't important.

This young man would never have come to his senses had a famine not come. And even when the famine came, he didn't come to his senses. He had to feed the pigs for a while.

Have you ever had to feed the pigs? This young man longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. You notice he had an expectation of entitlement. He thought others should give to him.

He was a wonderful, wonderful victim. I am not getting what is due me. I am not being treated fairly in this situation.

Why am I working so hard and getting so little? It's time my talents were recognized and I was given a position of responsibility. I'm a lot smarter than my boss, but no one gave him anything. It was in the midst of his pain and his anguish that it says he came to his senses, and his senses were not, you know, my daddy really loves me.

That's not what he thought. What he thought was, hey, my dad's slaves are treated better than I am. I'm going to go where the plate of food is.

You notice this was not because he loved his dad so much. It's because he wanted to live. He came to his senses and he said, how many of my father's hired men have food to spare and here I am starving to death.

I'm going to set out and go back to my father and say to him, father, I have sinned. Well, wait a minute. First good indication that he's come to his senses.

You know, he could have in the process said, you know what? My dad still has more money I could squeeze out of him. I think I'm going to make a trip back home and I'm going to try to squeeze some more out of dad. What if he'd gone back and said, dad, you owe me.

I need more from you. Will you please cover this? I'm having a hard time in that far city. Would you please cover my stay in the far city? What would the father have done? He would have said no.

Did you notice that the father did not go to the far city looking for his son? Wouldn't it have been more appropriate had the father gone to the pig pen, found him in the midst of the pig pen and said, look, son, I can give you a lot better food if you'll just come home. You know, would you just accept me again, son? The father didn't go to the pig pen. And he didn't say, son, if you'll accept me, I'll feed you.

Instead, the father stayed at home. Because the father wasn't the one who left. It was the son who left.

So the father waits at home. Now, that doesn't mean the father's heart is not broken. The father is constantly looking for his son.

There is something that I must do. If I am going to be saved. This young man could have sat in his pig pen and he could have said, oh, dad, I want to come home.

Dad, I'm sorry I've been such a mess. Dad, I need to come and sit at your table and eat your food. Dad, there's just got to be reconciliation between us.

My heart is hurting because I'm not with you. But if he continued to sit in his pig pen, the father would not have heard him. Confession of sin is not an adequate response for our sin.

There is a difference between confession and repentance. Confession says, you know, I was really stupid. I made a really bad decision.

Look, I'm sitting in the midst of this pig pen. But there has to be some point when that young man would stand to his feet and say, I'm leaving this pig pen. Until you stand up in the pig pen and say, I'm finished with this.

You'll continue to sit in the pig pen. Go with me to Luke, the sixth chapter. I'll begin reading with the sixth verse.

On another Sabbath, he went into the synagogue and was teaching and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus. So they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.

But Jesus knew what they were thinking. And he said to the man with the shriveled hand, get up and stand in front of everybody. So he got up and stood there.

There is a time in your walk with Jesus when he will say, get up. You no longer can hide. And you go up there and you stand there with your sin.

You stand there with your shriveled hand. You stand where everyone can see your condition. This is not a private matter.

Your sin is not a private matter. Now how do you think this man felt as he stood in front of this whole synagogue knowing that in that culture to have a shriveled hand was to be excluded from the house of God? It was to be viewed as one who had received a curse. This man, ashamed of his shriveled hand, seeing it as a curse from God because of his sin, stands in front of everybody.

If you are unwilling to go and stand before the people in your sin, you can never be healed. There has to be that place where you hear Jesus say, now get up and come up here. Where you become transparent about your condition.

If you pretend, oh I don't have a shriveled hand and you've got it up in your sweater, and you've got your good hand out there doing your dance, you'll never be healed. The confession of sin is specific. It is concrete.

And as long as you attempt to hide it, showing your good side and doing the dance, you can never be healed. Then the word of Jesus comes. And this is what's so terrifying to me.

The word of Jesus comes, but it is not to heal this man. The word of Jesus comes to the Pharisees. I ask you, what is lawful on the Sabbath? To do good or to do evil? To save life or to destroy it? The sin that we deal with is not a private matter.

It is a part of a much larger war that is going on between heaven and hell. You are not hidden away in a little individual corner, struggling with your little deal. Your deal is a part of a much bigger deal.

We're being played out before the universe is whether or not the blood of Jesus is adequate by the Spirit to break the power of sin and to bring healing into your life, to restore you to the likeness of Jesus, so that you can stand before Him, trusting Him, knowing utterly beyond question that He will deliver you. You see, this is the cosmic war that is going on, and we're caught in the midst of this war. And we think it's all about me, and it's very private, and now I'm going to keep my shriveled hand tucked in my pocket where nobody can see.

And Jesus says, stand up there, let's see your hand. He looked around at them. And He said to the man, stretch out your hand.

Wait a minute, it's a shriveled hand, I can't stretch it out. You're not being fair to me, Jesus. It's a shriveled hand, I can't help myself.

No, Jesus didn't ask you to help yourself. He said, stretch out your hand. He said, use your willpower to put yourself on my side.

Choose me. Don't choose these Pharisees. Don't choose these who say you can never have the victory.

Choose me. Stretch out your hand. And as He began to apply His will to stretch out His hand, that hand was completely restored.

And they were furious. The unrighteous are always furious when you leave them because you have gained the victory and you walk in righteousness. You're no longer like them and you no longer plunge into the wickedness with them.

They're always angered by this. And so this young man had to apply willpower to say, I will get up out of this mess and I will go home to my father. And when he got to his father, he said, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

You know what? God did something in this young man's heart when he left the pig pen until he got home, a total change occurred in his heart. When he left the pig pen, he was only interested in what he could get to eat. By the time he got home, he knew he was a sinner.

He knew that he had sinned against God and against his father. In the journey that we make with our shriveled hand, as we use our will to side with Jesus, don't be disturbed when the first thing that begins to happen is the recognition of how you have sinned against God and against your brother, your sister, your family. As we begin to exert our will and we begin to stretch ourselves out toward the Lord, our hearts begin to recognize our sin.

Our heart begins to recognize how evil our intentions have been. And we're given the grace to say, I've sinned. Do you know it's grace to say, I've sinned? And then comes the healing, the restoration.

Not by his power, not by his will. He only willed that he would be on his father's side. He only willed to be honest with his father, to stretch himself from the pig pen to his father's house.

I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired men. His father, filled with compassion, ran to his son, threw his arms around him, kissed him.

Quick, bring the best robe, put it on him, put the ring of forgiveness on his finger. Sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted calf, kill it.

Let's have a feast and celebrate. This son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.

And they began to celebrate. What did they do when the celebration was over? He had to get up at 5.30 and go milk the goats. He had to go birth the calves.

He had to go plow the field. He came under the covenant of the family. He had to submit to the father.

He no longer could party all night and sleep all day. Now in the church we've said, Jesus, I accept you. Now I'm my own boss.

I accepted Jesus, I'm home free. No, there's farm work to be done. There's fasting to be done.

There's praying to be done. There are souls to be won. When you come on the farm of the Lord, you come under the Lord's covenant.

That means fasting at least one day a week. That means prayer. That means the reading of the scriptures.

That means praying for the salvation of Washington. It means being available to stretch yourself out toward a brother or sister to minister the word to them. It means being willing to give to the poor.

Time, energy, money as the Holy Spirit directs you. It means that you are available for the work on the farm. The National Prayer Chapel is a farm.

It's not some place you come and attend. It's a people who are willing to sacrifice their pig pens to do the work of the gospel. When you go to that job, if the Lord assigned you to the Pentagon or the Lord assigned you to another place, you go to that place on assignment from Jesus.

That's your field of harvest where Jesus will give you fruit to bring to His altar. That's where the testimony is born. And then in every other place the Lord sends you, you go to that place, a street corner, a business office, wherever He sends you, and you bear testimony there that Jesus is Lord and that you're a part of the Lord's covenant and that He's breaking the power of sin in your life or has broken the power of sin in your life and you're inviting them to come and be free with you to leave their pig pens.

Now I'm telling you, when you begin to talk to people about their pig pens, they're going to become very upset or they're going to say, I've sinned, I want to come home. But if we pretend that everything is an oasis, if we pretend there are no pig pens, how can the lost be saved? Is there no difference between your life and the life of a lost pagan? Now just a word about the older son. He's worked very hard on the farm.

He has struggled mightily. And he's angry. If he'd had the courage, he would have done what the younger son did.

He'd have thrown it all overboard and left. Because after all, Dad doesn't appreciate him, doesn't take care of him. All he does is work.

No time to play. No time for a life. The work of the Gospel can become an idol.

The work of the Gospel can become an idol. The Lord God of Heaven, as the Father, first desires intimacy with us. He's not asked us to do a great work for Him.

He's asked us to allow Him to do a great work through us. Because you're a son or daughter of the Most High, you do what He calls you to do. But I have to tell you from the farm, my dad would never have been happy if I had skipped dinner because I was so busy on the farm.

Dinner at night was when the whole family sat around the table. It's when Dad told stories. It's when he wanted to know what our experiences of the day were.

It's when we had the delicious pudding. Dinner was what made the family all work. Without dinner, our family wouldn't have worked.

If you're not having dinner with Jesus every night, or every day, you're missing out on the stories of His heart. You're missing out on the family life. This older son, he was mad.

He wouldn't even come into the party. All the father wanted was a family that would stand together and covenant. That's all he wanted.

And he was rejoicing that this son had come to his senses, had left his pig pen, and had come back home, and humbled his heart and said, Can I be a part of the farm again? Now, I don't know whether you're the older son tonight, or whether you're the prodigal tonight, but you're one of the two. And the message has to be the same for either one. This is about the father, not about you.

This is about the father. And he's inviting you to a party. Yes, you're invited.

You're invited to the father's banqueting table. But it's going to mean you're going to have to come under the covenant of the father, and you're going to have to milk the cows, and you're going to have to farm the land, and you're going to have to be a responsible part of the family of God. You're going to have to deal with money.

The story of the prodigal son is really about money. The covenant that they're under is a covenant of fellowship with the father for the prosperity of the farm, for the common good. So it's about money.

You raise the crops to sell, so the family has a base to operate from. The reason you're out there working to milk the goats as they're kicking over their pails, the reason you're making the curds, the reason you're making the cheese, the reason you're making the kefir is for the common good of the family. You're part of the family of God.

So the reason we fast and pray, the reason we give our tithes and our offerings, the reason we do all of these things, the reason we read the Word, the reason we testify and witness, the reason we turn away from our own personal farm is because we want to be a part of what God is doing for the good of the kingdom of God. And in that, the mercy of God flows. In that, our hearts are refreshed, and we have a place, and we belong.

If you're sitting in a pig pen, in any area of your life, stretch your heart toward God. Begin to take those concrete, proactive steps to leave that pig pen and let the miracle working of God come into your heart and bring you home. And the ring of forgiveness will be placed on your hand, the robe of righteousness will be placed around you, and then you'll be sent out to do the farm work.

I'm Pastor Jan Greenlee. We pray that you've been awakened today by the Holy Spirit to a hunger for Jesus and His holiness. If you need someone to pray with you, call 703-490-8723.

That number again, 703-490-8723. Write to us at the National Prayer Chapel, Post Office Box 2346, Woodbridge, Virginia, 22195. That address again, Post Office Box 2346, Woodbridge, Virginia, 22195.

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