



Come Home

Luke 15:11-32
Message by Pastor Josh Lake

Come Home - March 2022

We all know the stories of prodigals: the children who waste their lives in rebellion against their parents, or rebellion against societal expectations and norms. There may be a prodigal in your own life. A child, a sibling. Maybe you are the prodigal. That word *prodigal* has come down to us with a particular weight. One might even call it baggage.

Today's text is commonly referred to as *the Prodigal Son*: The younger brother; a bohemian who refuses to conform and demands his inheritance so that be rid of his family, his father, his home and all the expectations he knows he could never live up to. So, instead of living up, he takes the inheritance his father gives him and lives down. He lives down to the nothing everyone said he would make of his life. He lives down to the last penny. Down into the mud of a pig-sty and pig slop.

It's funny how the prodigal son is not nearly as prodigal as the Father. Because, of course, prodigal doesn't mean *black-sheep of the family*. It refers to those who are "wastefully extravagant; who spend money recklessly." The Father, after all, is the one who gives his son a third of the estate before it is due to him. And it is the Father who welcomes the son back home **as a son** (and as a son, entitled to his share of the inheritance from the father's now-diminished estate). The Father is the one who spends recklessly to provide a feast, a party celebrating the return of this son who was lost and has been found. Dead now living.

Lingering in the back-ground of the entire story is the older, disapproving brother. He doesn't approve of his younger brother and his wasted life; he doesn't approve of his father, of parties, of rejoicing. Straight-laced and never a foot out of place, the elder brother has risen to the expectations place upon him. He's worked tirelessly for the father, the family, community. He has brought no shame on himself or anyone else. And

as the ne'er-do-well son returns and is given the father's robe, a ring, and a fattened calf, elder brother seethes.

The story ends abruptly, as Jesus turns to face the Pharisees. His voice trails off leaving the story unfinished. As he looks to them — through them — the Pharisees are all the while thinking, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." And they leave together, plotting how they might murder Jesus.

Questions:

- Who does Jesus direct this parable towards? Those who are lost, living lives of reckless abandon, or religious people who are self-assured?
- According to this story, who is most in danger of missing the message Jesus came to proclaim? Church people or people who are far from the church?
- If you were to give this parable a new name what would it be?
- Who in this story is called home? Who is welcomed home? Why are they welcomed?

