

Prodigals and those who love them

Luke 15:20-24 (NRSV) ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’^f ²²But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

My heart comes back again and again to the theme of the Prodigal.

The story of every person’s journey into the arms of the Father is the journey of the Prodigal. Any one who has never felt like the prodigal returning, would never have known the depth of the love of the Father. That is why we feel the love of God very deeply when we come back from the dregs of sin, but this love wanes when we start living respectable lives and think we’re doing a favour to God if we even go to church.

The centrality of the union between the Father and the Prodigal, is the prodigal’s awful consciousness of his own sin. It is this sin, that pulls him to the Father to be cleansed and forgiven. If you are good in your own eyes, perfect in all your religious rites (going regularly to church, prayer meetings), then we may never need God the way the prodigal needed. But the truth is we all need the love of the Father, the way the prodigal needed. Deep down in our hearts we can see a prodigal sleeping. This prodigal me, hiding inside of me will draw me into a deeper realization of the love of God.

This is one of the most beautiful paintings by Rembrandt.



If you can get your hands on your book *Prodigals and those who Love them* by Ruth Bell Graham, the wife of Billy Graham, just go for it and read it. I have not kept track of the times I read that book. It is a small book, with the collection of the stories of the many prodigals through the ages, starting from St. Augustine. Ruth had to deal with prodigal children of her own, who later came back. She has compiled the stories and poems which encouraged her into this book.

The song Amazing Grace was from the lips of a vile prodigal. But praise God John Newton came home to the Father, that we have such a wonderful song. Read his story in this link <http://www.joyfulheart.com/misc/newton.htm>

The Grace of the Father is undeserved, yet so full and large.

When John Newton became very old and his memory gone, he said, "I remember two things, that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Saviour." Just enough if we'd know this.