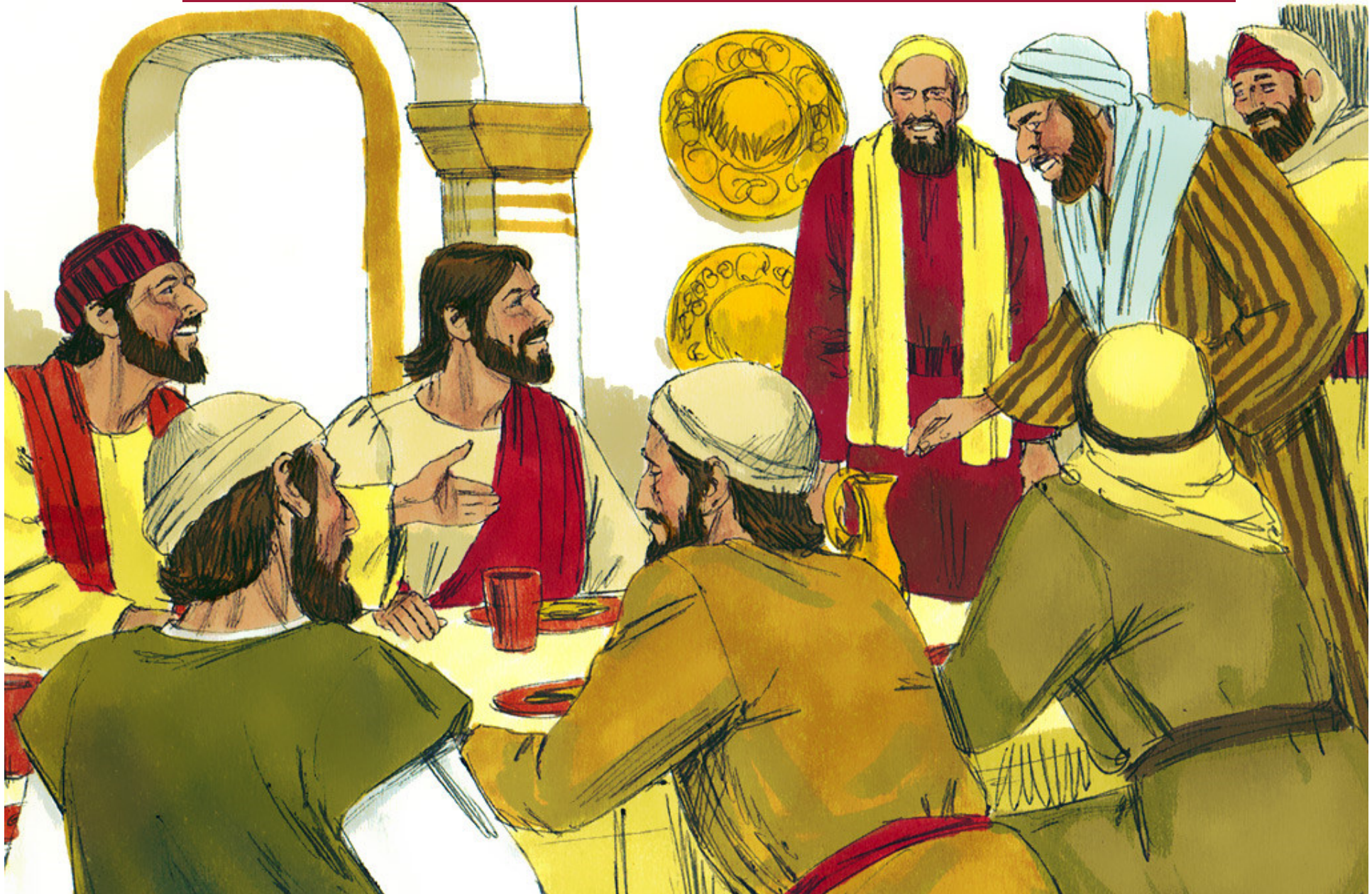




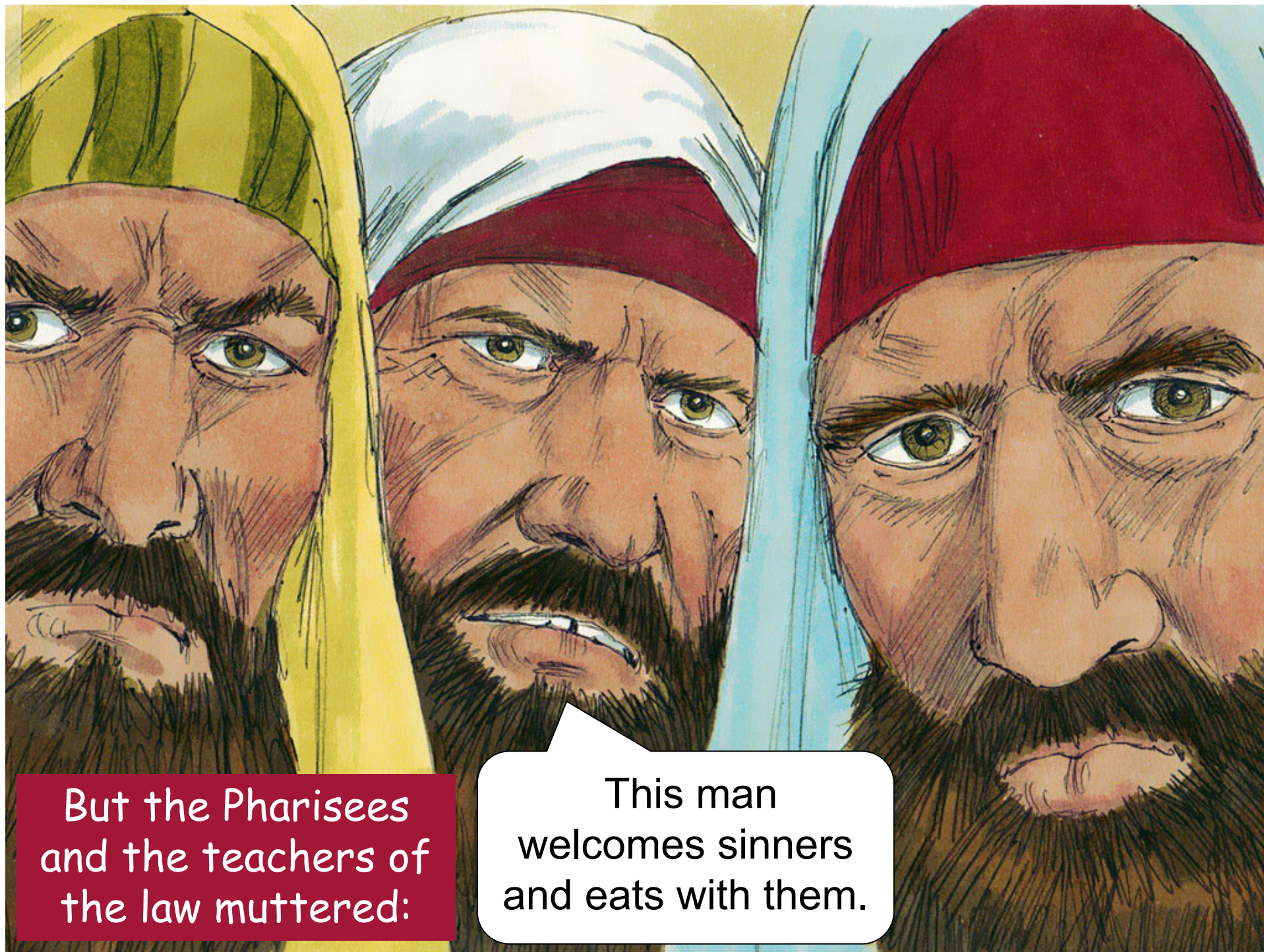
# THE PRODIGAL SON



Luke 15:1-32 (NIV) Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.







But the Pharisees  
and the teachers of  
the law muttered:

This man  
welcomes sinners  
and eats with them.



# THE PRODIGAL SON

- ❑ The context leading up to the parable is yet another argument with the Pharisees and teachers of the law. On this occasion their complaint is that Jesus has no sense of propriety about what kind of people a good prophet should associate with. In particular, he has an affinity for tax collectors and other such "sinners".
- ❑ In response to this accusation (that he welcomes sinners and eats with them) Jesus tells three parables:
  1. The parable of the lost sheep
  2. The parable of the lost coin
  3. The parable of the lost son (aka the parable of the prodigal son) <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The parables about the lost coin and the lost son are unique to Luke's gospel.



# THE PRODIGAL SON

- ❑ A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.
- ❑ All of these parables in Jesus' response (the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son) are stories about recovering something precious that is lost and then subsequently found.
- ❑ Jesus is thus implying that he associates with sinners because they are precious - but lost - and he wishes to recover and restore them.
- ❑ When facing criticism for going to the house of another tax collector, Zacchaeus, Jesus responds that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" Luke 19:10 (NIV).

<sup>1</sup> The parables about the lost coin and the lost son are unique to Luke's gospel.



# THE PRECIOUS SINNER

- ❑ This is a common theme in Jesus' parables. He regards the sinner - regarded as worthless by others - as:
  1. A pearl of great price (Matt 13).
  2. A hidden treasure that a man "sold everything he had" to purchase (Matt 13).
  3. A precious possession (the sheep, the coin) that has been lost but must be recovered despite great effort.
  4. A wayward son whose return the father longs for.
  5. Someone whose redemption constitutes an event that angels rejoice over.
- Luke 15:10 (NIV) "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."



# THE PRECIOUS SINNER



6. The despised and corrupt tax collector Zacchaeus (Luke 19) is regarded by Jesus as "a son of Abraham" (i.e. one of God's covenant people).
7. Jesus regards the sinful woman who anoints his feet (but was despised by his dinner host) as a sincere penitent - a woman of "great love" (Luke 7).



Her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love.



# THE PRODIGAL SON

- ❑ This story about the lost son is one of the most well-known parables of Jesus. If parables were songs this might be voted Jesus' number one hit of all time.
- ❑ Someone asked Charles Dickens once what the best short story in the English language was, and he replied "The Prodigal Son".<sup>1</sup> In fact the famous novel "Great Expectations" by Dickens is considered to be an elaborate retelling of the parable of the Prodigal Son.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.moreillustrations.com/Illustrations/prodigoal%20son.html>

# THE PRODIGAL SON

- ❑ It is more commonly referred to as the Parable of the Prodigal Son, although the word "prodigal" is not found in the Bible. Most have probably only heard the word used in this parable.



- ❑ What does "prodigal" mean?
- ❑ It means "wasteful" - particularly with regard to money. It refers to someone who spends with reckless abandon. The youngest son in the story exhibited this type of behaviour with his handling of his share of his father's estate.



Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father:

Father, give me my share of the estate.



# EASY MONEY

- ❑ One thing is clear: this is a boy in rebellion. He has looked at his father's style (i.e. hard work) and decided he doesn't like the look. He therefore wants out.<sup>1</sup>



- ❑ Indeed, "I want" is often the source of sin. In this there is a curious cycle played out in every generation. It is simply this: we want, we get what we want - and then we don't like the result.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.becomingcloser.org/life\\_of\\_christ\\_2/prodigoal\\_son.html](http://www.becomingcloser.org/life_of_christ_2/prodigoal_son.html)



# EASY MONEY

- ❑ The Law of Moses stipulated that the oldest brother got a double share of the inheritance.
  - Deut 21:17 (ESV) ... he shall acknowledge the firstborn... by giving him a double portion of all that he has...
- ❑ As there were only two brothers in this parable, the older brother was entitled to two thirds of the estate, while the younger brother would get one third. So when the younger son demands his "share of the estate" this equates to one third of the father's possessions.
- ❑ He would normally only get this upon the father's death. But he is effectively saying that he can't wait for his father to die - he wants his money immediately. In a society where parents were held in high regard - this is especially shocking.



So he divided his property between them.



# EASY MONEY

- ❑ Equally surprising in the light of the audacity of the younger son's request, is that his father obliges and divides the estate, while he is still alive.
- This reflects the amazing indulgence that God shows toward us. Even when we are acting as selfishly as the prodigal son, God indulges us. He yields what is his and allows us to misuse it out of respect for the freedom that he has given us. But he knows that the misuse of our freedom will have no better results than it did with the prodigal son's misuse of his freedom, and God trusts that we will learn our lesson and come back to him.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/jimmy-akin/12-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-prodigal-son>

Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country ...





... and there squandered his wealth in wild living.



# LEAVING HOME

- ❑ On receiving one third of his father's estate, the younger son leaves home and goes to "a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living".
  - In the context of those hearing the story it means he leaves Israel to go into voluntary exile in a pagan Gentile country where he could live loosely without being reprimanded by his fellow Jews.
- ❑ He leaves his father's land and funds his sinful lifestyle in a foreign land with the money his father has given him.
  - This is a picture of the sinner who squanders his God-given resources while keeping himself from God's presence and the presence of God's people.



# LEAVING HOME

- ❑ If some Dr. Spock-like psychologist wrote this parable, he might say that the Prodigal left home because his father oppressed him, or that he was sheltered from life by his overly-protective mother and the poor financial prospects in a profit-driven society. Or they would blame it on the president who should have provided more programs to occupy troubled teens and young men. Or others could argue that the Rabbis were not strict enough, or that the boy was forced to go the Synagogue every Saturday and now he is rebelling. But the parable is woefully lacking in blame. **The son --despite his father's goodness -- made a choice -- it was that simple.** And sometimes, folks, that is still what happens today. We each have wills of our own.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ed Vasicek on the Parable of the Prodigal Son



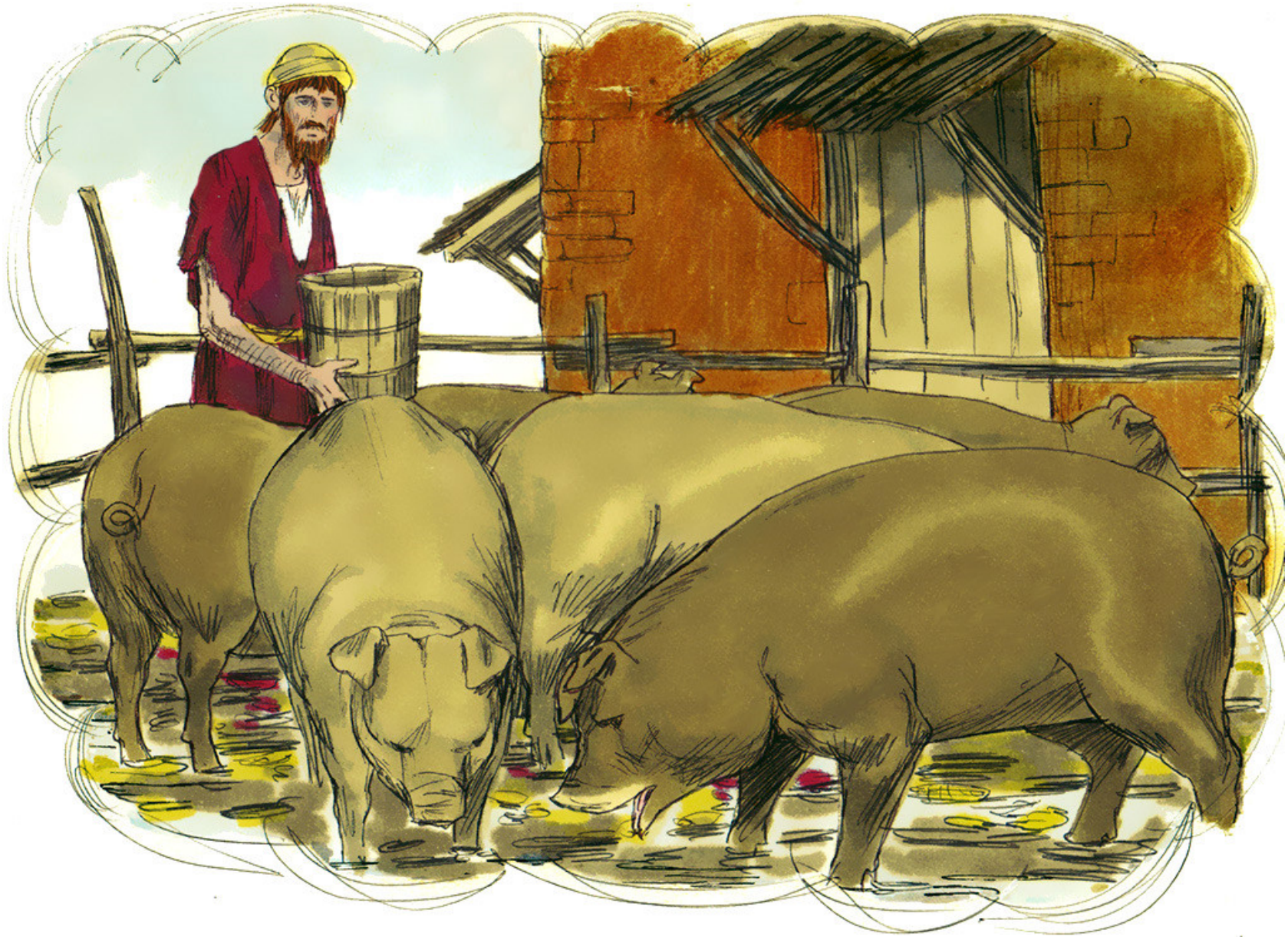
After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.



# THE MONEY RUNS OUT

- ❑ Thomas Tusser said, "A fool and his money are soon parted". The prodigal doesn't work or invest the money he has prematurely inherited, but instead squanders "his wealth in wild living" and then "began to be in need."
- The natural state of unregenerate mankind is always toward lust and greed and extravagance of all kinds; without God we squander our resources and energies until we are void and empty. <sup>1</sup>
- But eventually the resources he had were exhausted and a hard time came. If he had not spent what he had on loose living (as we will later learn, on prostitutes), he would have had the money he needed to weather the hard time, but he didn't. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://allaboutjesuschrist.org/parable-of-the-prodigal-son-faq.htm> <sup>2</sup> <http://ncregister.com/blog/jimmy-akin/12-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-prodigal-son>



So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.



He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.



# HIS FALL

- ❑ He finally is forced to get a job to survive. But it is menial labour and involves feeding pigs - which for a Jew was humiliating - given that pigs were regarded as unclean animals.
- ❑ What have we learnt so far?
- ❑ The parable teaches us the depths to which our own misuse of freedom will bring us. Using our own God-given free will we can turn our backs on our heavenly Father and distance ourselves from his presence.
- ❑ We will only "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb 11:25, KJV). After "enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin" (Heb 11:25, NIV) we will inevitably land up in a far worse state than we were in originally.



# HIS FALL

- ❑ The “distant country” has no room for failure or second chances. There is no such thing as grace or forgiveness. The citizen of the distant country that he works for is more concerned about the pig’s welfare than that of his foreign labourer. The prodigal son is so hungry he craves the pig’s food but even that is not given to him.
- ❑ Where were all his friends that he had partied with or who had benefitted from his money? Everyone was his friend when he was spending the money; no one cared about his diet when he was broke.
- ❑ If we are intent on leaving God, things will go badly for us. We will experience humiliation in an uncaring world. When we remain in that place where we are alienated from the Father’s loving care, we sink into want, darkness and depression.

When he came to  
his senses, he said:

How many of my father's  
hired servants have food  
to spare, and here I am  
starving to death!





I will set out and go back to my father and say to him:  
Father, I have sinned against heaven and against  
you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son;  
make me like one of your hired servants.



# THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

- ❑ Eventually “he came to his senses” and remembered his father’s house - a place of plenty - for family and servants alike.
- The parable of the prodigal son indicates, however, that we do have the opportunity to make a change; we do not have to stay in our hopeless state; we can come to ourselves. The lost son realized that in his father’s house there was sustenance for him; he humbled himself, willing, if necessary, to be his father’s servant, and started back home.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ When the sinner realises their plight, their best course is to return to the Father and request his forgiveness.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.



# THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

❑ He plans to return to his father and to say three things:

1. Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.

2. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

3. Treat me as one of your hired servants.

❑ This parable teaches us that before we can return to God, we need to acknowledge our sin and repent.





So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son...



... threw his arms around him and kissed him.



# THE RETURN

- ❑ That he was able to see the younger son when he was still a long way off means that the father was watching for his son, waiting for him, longing for him. The father runs to him, embraces him, loves him and gives him gifts; he seems totally oblivious to the fact that his son has disrespected him, acted outrageously, and lost everything. <sup>1</sup>
- ❑ This is a wonderful picture of the great love of God towards us. He seeks after us, reaches out to us. When we come to Him, He washes away all our evil deeds of the past, not holding them against us. "You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). <sup>1</sup>
- ❑ Let's look at two more recent examples of prodigal sons.

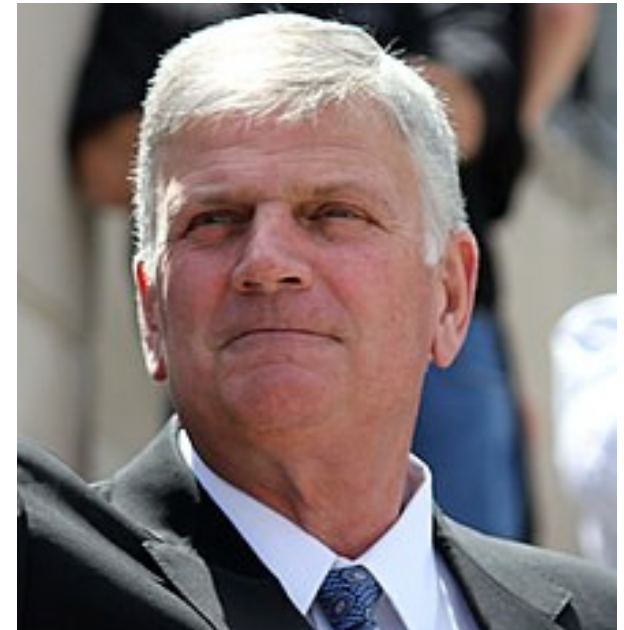
<sup>1</sup> Ibid.



# THE RETURN

- ❑ He was a rebel, college drop-out, a party boy, a carouser. He smoked, drank hard liquor, was a brawler, and was well known by all of the local police authorities, and had more than one visit down to the jail. By his own admission he was the classic example of the prodigal son.<sup>1</sup> Yet he succeeded the greatest evangelist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - Billy Graham.
- ❑ His name is Franklin Graham. Today, he not only has a tremendous benevolent ministry called "The Samaritan Purse," but is now preaching the gospel just like his father to thousands and thousands of people all over the world. He will tell you he is where he is today because **he had a father who left the lights on.**<sup>1</sup>

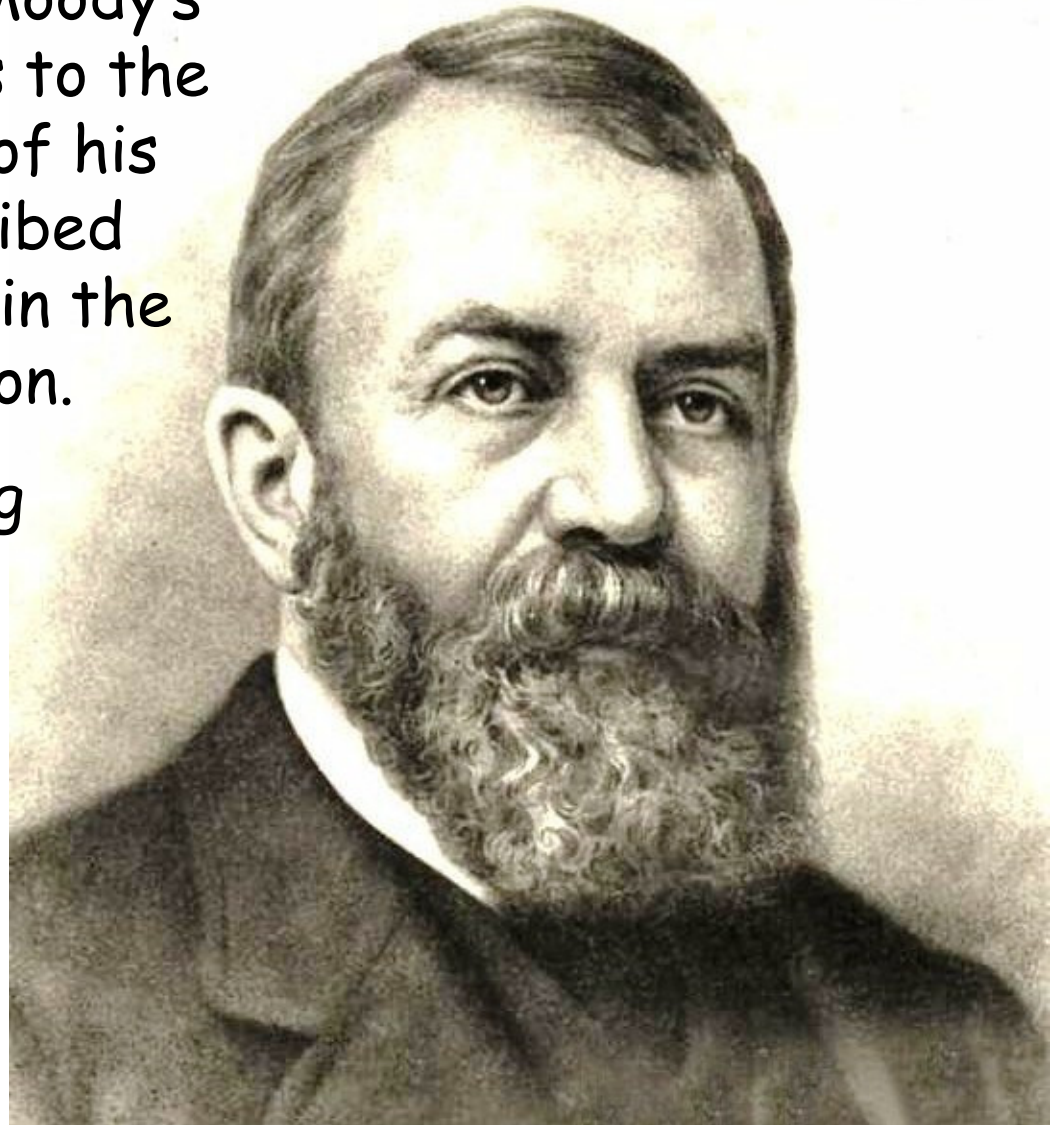
<sup>1</sup> Dr. James Merritt - "God Leaves the Lights On"



# THE RETURN

- ❑ The saddest memory of 19th-century evangelist, D.L. Moody's days of childhood relates to the running away from home of his eldest brother. He described the incident pathetically in the sermon on the Prodigal Son.

"I well remember the long winter nights when we all sat around the fire, how mother would go on telling us about father and his goodness - she was never tired of talking about him.





# THE RETURN

- ❑ "But if any of us mentioned our eldest brother, all would be hushed in a moment. She never could speak of him without tears. She said it would have eased her heart even to know he was dead.

"I don't know,' she would say, 'but he is lying sick in some foreign land, with nobody to watch over him.' I do believe she would have gone all round the world to find him.

"Some nights I used to hear that mother's voice praying for that boy. Ah! how she used to pour out her heart in prayer to God for her wandering son; and when on winter nights a great gale would come sweeping and howling along, she would turn pale, and in a voice choked with sobs would say, 'Perhaps my boy is at sea with the gale blowing, and in danger of going down!'

# THE RETURN

□ "Well, on one particular day there was always a family gathering to thank God for the harvest, and on this occasion she always put a chair for him, but the chair was always empty. Many and many a time have I gone to the window in the hope that I should see him coming up the garden-walk to cheer our mother's heart, but all was in vain - he didn't come. And so time rolled on. The step that once was so firm became feeble, and the hair that was black as night became silvery grey. How she loved that boy! But amid all this disappointment she held fast to the hope that she would yet see him come back before she died.

"One day, as she sat in her cottage, her twin children with her (for the rest of us had gone away into the world, one in one direction and another in another, to fight the battle of life), she saw a stranger coming through the gate.



# THE RETURN

- ❑ "At first she did not recognize that boy, with his long beard and altered face. But when she saw the tears straggling down his cheeks, the truth flashed on her in an instant, and she sprang to him with the words, 'Come in! come in!'

"No, mother,' he said, 'I will not until you forgive - never!'

"Do you believe she forgave him? Forgave him! She threw her arms round him and kissed him - the dead was alive, the lost was found! I cannot tell you the joy that welled up in my heart when I heard the news that my poor, long-lost brother had come home again. But this I know. The tears were wiped away from that mother's eyes, and the sunshine of happiness was in her heart again."

The son said to him:

Father, I have sinned  
against heaven and  
against you. I am no  
longer worthy to be  
called your son.





# REPENTANCE

- ❑ The prodigal son must have recited his rehearsed speech a hundred times on the road home. He starts to recite it to his father but only manages to say the first two parts.
  - a) "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you"
  - b) "I am no longer worthy to be called your son"
- ❑ After admitting his own unworthiness, he had intended to make amends by offering to take the post of a humble servant. But he never got a chance to say that third part. The father interrupts him and takes the conversation in a very different direction. Rather than treating him as a servant, he turns to the actual servants and orders a celebration in his honour.
- ❑ As sinners we too cannot make amends - all we need to do is repent and return to the Father.

But the father  
said to his  
servants:

Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him.  
Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.  
Bring the fattened calf and kill it.





Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.



So they  
began to  
celebrate

# RESTITUTION

- ❑ What do the actions of the father teach us? The father refuses to treat his penitent son as a hired servant.
- The younger son is still a son! As a result, his return is something to be celebrated! He is to wear a fancy robe! A fancy ring! Shoes! There is to be a fancy feast for everyone! There is to be music and dancing! Why? Because "This my son was dead, and is alive again" and "He was lost, and is found." This shows us God's reaction when we return from being lost in sin. He doesn't begrudge us what we have done. He doesn't take us back reluctantly. Like the father in the parable, he takes us back joyously! Eagerly! <sup>1</sup>
- ❑ But Jesus' story doesn't end there.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/jimmy-akin/12-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-prodigal-son>

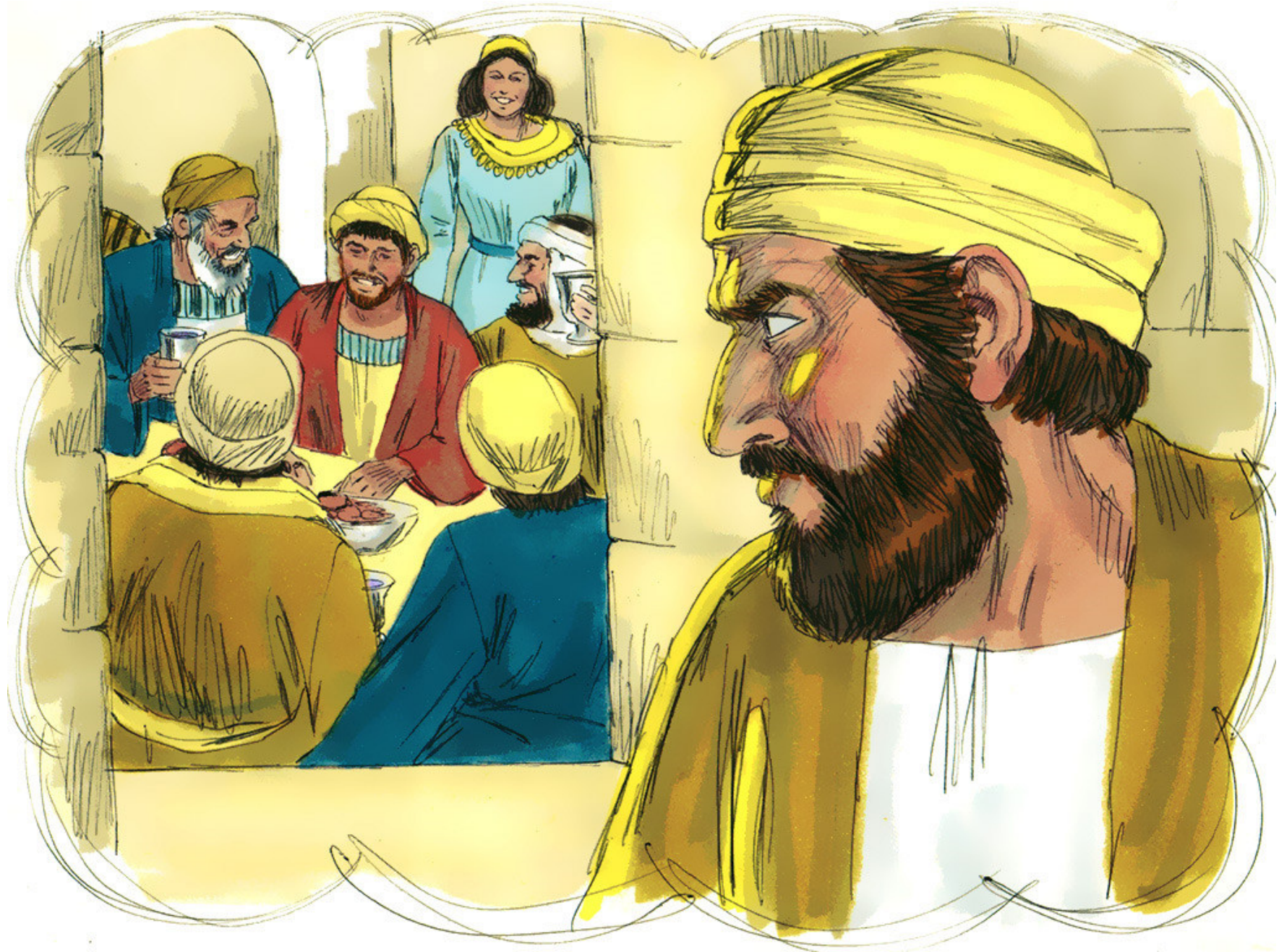


Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.



Your brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.





The older brother became angry and refused to go in.





So his father went out and pleaded with him.

# THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS SON

- ❑ The parable of the prodigal son also shows the attitude of the self-righteous sinner, pictured by the older son. Both sin and self-righteousness separate us from God.
- ❑ The Father represents God. The younger prodigal son represents the tax collectors and sinners Jesus was reaching out to. But the elder son is a picture of the self-righteous Pharisees that Jesus was addressing.
- ❑ He didn't demand his inheritance. He stayed faithful to his father. And now he is angry. Why should his younger, wasteful, sinful brother receive such a reception by their father? The older brother is so angry that he refuses to go inside and join the party. Naturally, his father hears about it and comes to talk to him. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.



# GRACE

- ❑ Jesus was the one who gave us the gift of grace:
  - Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17)
- ❑ While Paul explicitly taught the concept of grace, Jesus would teach the idea using parables.
  - He often told stories which demonstrated that God's grace was undeserved and offered freely - but that how and when it was given was God's sole prerogative.
  - Many parables of Jesus preach grace broad enough to forgive any sin, and to be available regardless of the seeming unworthiness of its recipient. Examples of this included the parables of the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, the Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:23-35), the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt 20:1-16) and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14).

# GRACE

- ❑ Grace is given by God at his sole discretion.
  - The younger son demands the family fortune and subsequently wastes it, then returns home expecting little in the way of good treatment. However the father welcomes him as a son and there is a great celebration.
  - The elder brother felt that he deserved his father's favour, while his brother didn't. But the Father blesses his returning son despite the objections of his other son who had stayed at home and served dutifully.
- ❑ This is a common thread in the parables of Jesus: the grace of God is something that upsets settled human notions about merit and about what is deserved from God.



But he answered his father:



Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.



But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!





# THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS SON

- ❑ The son complained that he had “slaved all these years.” He implies that his service to his father (which would benefit himself as he was the heir) was a chore.
- ❑ Note that he says “this son of yours” - not “this brother of mine”. He forgets that the prodigal is his brother and that he should rejoice that he has repented. He’s not just angry with his brother, he’s angry with his father, too.
  - This is again typical of the self-righteous Pharisees that this son represents. Rather than rejoicing that the sinners were seeking out Jesus, they were offended as they considered them irredeemable.

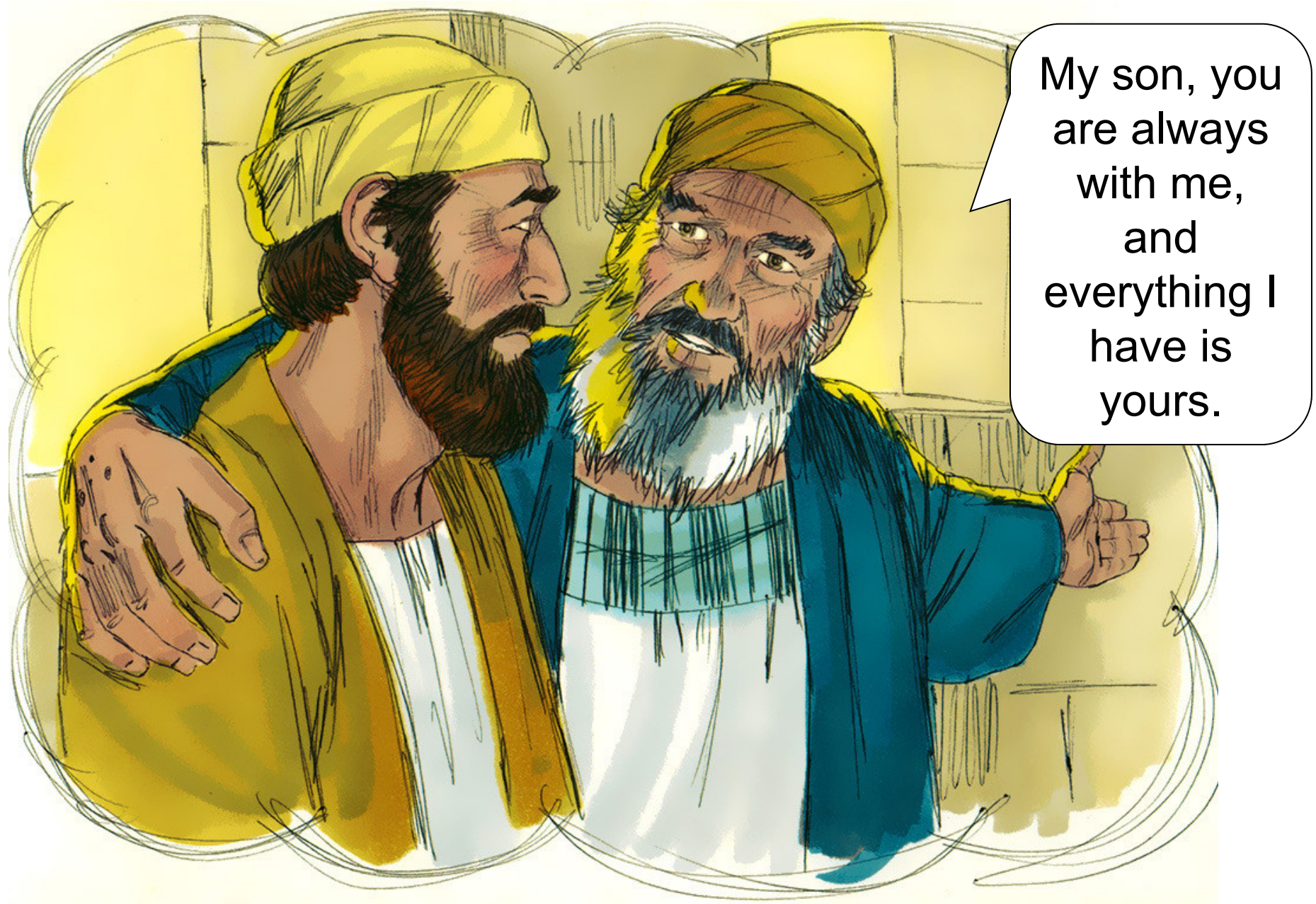
<sup>1</sup> <https://www.allaboutjesuschrist.org/parable-of-the-prodigal-son-faq.htm>

# THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS SON

- ❑ He quarrelled with his father that the younger son had messed up and yet the father had prepared for him the "fatted calf." Because he considered himself better than the younger son, he could not share in the father's joy. <sup>1</sup>
- ❑ He points out that he has never disobeyed his father's commands but that his father has never given him a kid (a young goat) so that he could slaughter it and have a party with his friends. In contrast, the younger brother has "devoured your living with harlots" ... but when he comes back "the fatted calf" (that is, the best, most tender and delicious animal...) is killed! The older brother sees this difference in treatment as a manifest injustice toward him and is angry with his father because of it. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid. <sup>2</sup> <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/jimmy-akin/12-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-prodigal-son>





- ❑ In his self-pity, the older son was forgetting the riches available to him in his father's house.





But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.



# THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS SON

- ❑ He seems concerned about his own security in the family as his father seemingly shows favouritism to his bother.
- ❑ What does the father do? The father tells the son three things. First, he tells him: "Son, you are always with me." This seems to be a reassurance to the elder son that he has not lost his place in the family. His place is secure.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ Second, he tells him: "and all that is mine is yours." This is because the division of property has already taken place. The younger soon took his third, so the two-thirds that remain will go entirely to the older son.<sup>1</sup> This means that the current celebration does not represent a threat to the older brother or his inheritance. Instead, it is a celebration of joy occasioned by the return of the son.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/jimmy-akin/12-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-prodigal-son>

# THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS SON

- ❑ Thus the father thirdly tells him: "It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ Christians who have never fallen should not resent those who come back. They should share in their Father's joy. Their own place is secure and their heavenly reward is not threatened. God loves them just as much as he loves those who come back through a dramatic conversion.<sup>1</sup>
- ❑ We all require God's grace, His unearned, unmerited love for us. The father went out to the disgruntled older son. God is He who always continues to seek after us, regardless of the state we are in.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.



# GRACE

- ❑ Grace is unmerited favour. That means you don't deserve it.
- ❑ If they call it mercy, then you didn't earn it. Mercy cannot be given because you deserve it. Judgment can. There is no attempt here, or anywhere in Scripture, to distinguish worthy sinners from unworthy sinners. Even Christ never attempted that distinction. The only distinction given is between the repentant and those who are not. As is shown by Christ's remarks about Nineveh, even the greatest offenders have a place in the kingdom - if they repent.<sup>1</sup>
- Matt 12:41 (NIV) "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here."

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.becomingcloser.org/life\\_of\\_christ\\_2/prodigal\\_son.html](http://www.becomingcloser.org/life_of_christ_2/prodigal_son.html)

# GRACE

- ❑ If salvation were earned by works and human effort, men could take pride in their efforts toward holiness, and God's gift of grace would be diminished in contrast to man's efforts.
- ❑ But salvation is a gift so there is no room for boasting, self-righteousness or believing that we are better than others.
  - Eph 2:8-9 (NIV) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **not by works, so that no one can boast.**



# THE FATHER'S LOVE



# THE FATHER'S LOVE

- ❑ There is no love like the love of our heavenly Father.
- ❑ He calls us his children.
  - 1 John 3:1 (NIV) See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!
- ❑ His love is great.
  - Ps 86:15 (NIV) But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.
- ❑ We can rely on his love.
  - 1 John 4:16 (NIV) And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.



# THE FATHER'S LOVE

- ❑ His love lasts forever.

- Ps 136:26 (NIV) Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever.

- ❑ It is unfailing.

- Jer 31:3 (NIV) The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

- ❑ His love is something we can depend on.

- Deut 7:9 (NIV) Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.

# THE FATHER'S LOVE

- ❑ Nothing can separate us from God's love.
  - Rom 8:37-39 (NIV) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- ❑ He loves us sacrificially.
  - John 3:16 (NASB) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.



# THE FATHER'S LOVE

- ❑ He loved us when we were unlovely.
  - Rom 5:8 (NIV) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- ❑ His love motivated him to extend grace to the sinner.
  - Eph 2:4-5 (NIV) But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.
  - Zeph 3:17 (NIV) The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.

# THE FATHER'S LOVE

- ❑ Because he loves us we can come to him with all our troubles.
  - 1 Pet 5:6-7 (NIV) Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
- ❑ God's love motivates us to reciprocate with love for God and also others.
  - 1 John 4:7 (NIV) Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
  - 1 John 4:19 (NIV) We love because he first loved us.

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