

**The Merciful Father**  
**Luke 15:20-32**  
**4-16-17 AM**

The parable of the prodigal son is well known because of the beauty of the story. In a previous lesson we considered the importance of understanding the wasteful son. He represents any believer who has an inheritance with God, but wastes it in worldliness. It is important to understand repentance.

There is also something we can learn about God our Father. As Christians we are those who have received an adoption by Grace (Romans 8:15). It is important to understand that we no longer address God as Jehovah, the name of God, but as Father (Matthew 6:9) We understand that in the New Testament, the name Jehovah is entirely absent; in the Old Testament, God is almost never called Father. This change is the result of the work of Christ, who by His life and death became the first of brethren and children to God (Hebrews 2:10-11). God's desire from the beginning was to bring man into this intimate relationship.

There are five lessons we learn about our Heavenly Father in this parable

1. Our Father permits us to leave – if we are intent upon leaving the grace of God, He will allow it. We cannot expect that He will stop us if we want to sin; this is what it means to leave Him. When we walk in sin, we are cut off from God (1 John 1, 1 Timothy 4:1).

2. Our Father cannot pursue us in sin – the nature of God is to be opposed to sin. Indeed, sin might be defined as being that which is not of God (Romans 14:23). When we enter into sin, God does not follow us. In the parable, the Father said that while the son was apart from Him, he was dead. So it is with us; when we leave we are dead to Him. Scriptures reveal that He does not hear us in sin (John 9:31, Isaiah 59:2, Psalm 66:2). It took the wasteful son's return to be seen again by his Father.

3. Our Father waits for our return – when we enter into sin, our Father's desire is that we return to Him. Scriptures reveal that He desires all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). We know that He detests souls being lost (Ezekiel 18:23,32). It is this mercy that is the greatest Glory of God (Isaiah 30:18).

4. Our Father accepts our repentance – this parable reveals a characteristic of our Father that is revealed time and time again – His remarkable capacity to forgive us. When the son returned, the Father did not ask him where the wealth he left with was, nor did He bring any chastisement. Instead, He embraced His son. Our Father can receive anyone who comes to Him in true repentance; chief in this virtue is the broken heart (Isaiah 57:15). But we need to understand that He cannot (because of His divine nature) receive any who will not repent. In the parable, the son repented when he came to his senses and returned to his Father. Had he not returned (repented), he would have remained dead to his Father.

5. Our Father has done EVERYTHING He can to bring us back to Him – we understand that He cannot enter into sin, nor can He force us to change our minds. But what He can do He has done.

- He has paid for the path to His home – Acts 20:28
- He has paid the price for entry – Revelation 5:9
- He has posted signs to the estate – 2 Peter 1:3
- He has told us how to get back – 1 John 1:9

There is much to learn in just a few verses about the character of our Heavenly Father. It is a great encouragement to learn of how much He desires us to return to Him, and the great joy in heaven when just one sinner repents.