



Dear Little Lambs,

One of the advantages of writing the newsletter devotion is the privilege of choosing the topic. This month our focus turns to the parable of The Prodigal Son found in Chapter 15 of Luke’s Gospel. For the record, we must note that the word “prodigal” is not found anywhere in the Bible but has been widely adopted to distinguish the unnamed, squandering younger son from his whining, “I’m a victim” older brother.

Most of us probably have a favorite parable. The New Testament includes about 40 parables, give or take, providing an absolute treasure trove of Godly wisdom and Gospel truths. Perhaps the parables are so well-loved because of their relative simplicity—often a true-to-life story that the reader can understand without a seminary degree. And so it is with the benchmark of parables, the Prodigal Son. Just a simple life experience that could strike close to home for any one of us.

Taught in Sunday school since forever, we all know the story. A foolish young man in search of himself and a knowing father who loved the boy enough to let him go. The account begins when the son makes his arrogant demand, **“Father, give me . . .”** (Luke 15:12 KJV). The editor of this newsletter keeps us on a strict diet of 500 words per month so there’s no space here to address the sad and certain peril awaiting today’s “Give me . . . I’m entitled” generation. Perhaps another day.

In the proud Jewish culture, it would be horrifying for a son to “demand” anything of his father, least of all an early inheritance. But the Prodigal did exactly that. The father was undoubtedly heartsick and the family was beyond embarrassed, with village tongues wagging. Nevertheless, the family fortune was divvied up as the younger son struck out on his own to “a far country” to sew his wild oats, to make his mark in the world. For sure, he would show the old man just how out of touch with reality his antiquated ideas of hard work, economy and self-discipline really were . . .

Next frame, please. We now see our young savant working on a pig farm, probably owned by a Gentile. Look! There’s our boy climbing up out of the mud pit, filthy dirty, knee deep in pig you-know-what, chewing the husks salvaged from the trough. Worse than hell on earth for a Jew!!

But then came a critical turning point in the boy’s life.

“And when he came to himself . . .” (Luke 15:17a).

That has always been a favorite descriptive phrase even though the literal meaning of the words seems jumbled. Every one of us understands what had happened. Now under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the boy came to his senses. He was sick and tired of being sick and tired. Broke and broken he began to formulate a plan to go back home. By this time, that tyrannical old man with his strict rules was looking mighty good. The boy prepared a tearful apology and rehearsed his speech. Hat in hand, he started for home. With every step, he must have felt the gut-wrenching fear that his repentance would not be enough. After all, he had wasted his substance, trampled his father’s reputation and forever dishonored the family name.

“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him . . .” (Luke 15:20b).

Now we do not know how many weeks or months had elapsed since the boy left home. Apparently, he had a lot of “riotous living” to take care of. But from this one line—that the father saw the boy when he was still a long way away—we know that the father was most anxious for his son’s return. For the father to have seen him in the distance presupposes that the father was actually looking for him. The father must have been standing in the front yard—perhaps every day since the boy left—eagerly staring off in the distance, shading his eyes from the sun *longing, hoping, praying* “Maybe today . . .”

As with most parables, there are several lessons. But this one verse drives home that irrefutable truth: When we have wandered off “into a far country,” out of relationship with our father—and all of us have done it to one degree or another—our **Father**, yes our Heavenly Father is ever ready for us to come back home. He waits patiently, lovingly, knowingly, for His repentant son or daughter who “once was lost but now is found” to come home to the feast. And the Father is so, so willing to forgive. Amen. Blessings to all, Mike Rider, Volunteer



Dear Mr. and Mrs. Sala (*From a Graduate*)

I wanted to write y’all and let you know I received the Study Bible and my certificate of completion of your Little Lambs course. I want to thank you very much for the Bible. I will put it to very good use! I also wanted to thank y’all both for all your time and effort y’all put into these lessons. Each lesson always had a personalized “Lamb” card and it really means a lot to us who are currently just another number in here. It would be very easy to forget one was even human if you didn’t do something positive with our time. No better way to do that than with God’s Holy Word. I wanted y’all to know that y’all do a great job and I am sure the Lord has many blessings in store for y’all! Y’all do make a huge difference in our lives! God bless you all!

Thank you again. Praise God! Michael, La.