

BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

THE WORSHIP OF GOD • MARCH 31, 2019

Psalm Litany

Based on Psalm 32

Happy are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sin is covered by grace.

**Happy are those who are free from the burden of iniquity,
in whom there is no deceit.**

When I kept silence my body wasted away; I groaned inwardly day and night.

My strength seemed dried up as by the heat of summer.

We acknowledge our sin to you, and do not hide. We said:

We will confess our transgressions to the Lord.

God forgives, the old is gone and behold, the new has come!

The Scripture

Luke 15:11-32

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' So 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. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But 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. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he

answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes; you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'”

The Message
Enough Has No Winners or Losers
Terry Overfelt

[Editor’s Note: Terry began her message by sharing a projection of the several definitions of the word *prodigal*. Furthermore, throughout her message, there were moments when a sound effect was heard: either a “ding” for “winner” and a “buzz” for “loser.” They are noted in this manuscript.]

Prodigal: wasteful, extravagant, spendthrift, improvident, imprudent, immoderate, profligate, thriftless, excessive, intemperate, irresponsible, self-indulgent, reckless, wanton.

Having or giving something a lavish scale, generous, liberal, unsparing, bountiful.

Introduction

I just want to give a shout out to all our *Prodigals in the house!* Welcome to the show, “ENOUGH!” Today’s topic is...”Bible Times Winners [ding] or Losers [buzz].

First it’s important that we all know how to play. It will be your job to stomp your feet on the floor when it is time to roll the four stones away. Let’s practice: Roll the stone away! [stomping] Well done.

Throughout the game, I will be asking you to shout out if this is winning or a losing moment. Your job is to unabashedly choose. There will be no shaming, and everybody gets pearls at the end.

Get ready to play? **ENOUGH** already!

Today’s Bible Times Winners or Losers come from the most famous parable of Jesus. This has put it in danger of becoming a myth. Danger is the word here because we relegate the myths in our lives to be the story that is told the same every time and everyone knows the beginning, middle and end.

A parable, in contrast is a short story we might well know but it *adapts* to each listener with its moral or religious lesson by comparison or analogy. This is *the Jesus genre*, to convey his messages.

So often this story is referred to as **The Prodigal Son** and its power is boxed in when the parable turns allegory and *ideas* are symbolized as *people*...in example...the son who left for the far country is sin and the father is forgiveness...but enough of the literary devices.

Today we are playing the parable for the living, breathing power within it. Everybody take a big breath and exhale saying, "Enough!"

Prodigal 1

Let's Play: Roll away stone number one [stomping].

[Sung] "Carry on my Wayward Son!"

This Prodigal is: The Runaway Son.

By **Prodigal** definition he is:

extravagant, spendthrift, excessive, irresponsible

Parable: This son insults the culture, the nation, the family, the father and himself when he asks for his inheritance while the farm is still active, and his father is still alive and working. This insult would cause him to be outcast and "dead" to the family, business and tribe. But he does so because he is leaving and likely never turning back. Self-indulgent son: Winner [ding] or Loser [buzz]?

What if we suspended our judgment to see:

Him as courageous, countercultural and called? Can we honor the fact that farming was not his thing and he didn't want to spend his life dishonoring the family livelihood, or his own nature and gifts? This was a very brave realization to act upon. His opportunities were limited, and folks didn't hardly imagine deviating, let alone boldly asking for the means to do so. This is one brave, self-assured young man who honors his father with his difficult truth. He falls on the worst of times as consequences for his poor choices and misfortune. But he isn't saying his failures were because of one of the three, big rationales:

1. *I misunderstood,*
2. *I had this mental, physical or social construct working against me,*
3. *Somebody or something else is part of the blame.*

No, he takes full accountability for his deplorable landing. He realizes that his father's servants live better than he in the disgraceful pig pen, and he is starving. He came to himself and interestingly, practices the confession of *sinning against heaven and*

before his father and unworthiness; maybe a sign of earnestly trying to get it right, or practiced manipulation to sound contrite. Regardless, he's heading back home. He's had **enough of losing while trying to win.**

Prodigal 2

Alright Prodigal audience, it is time to roll away stone number two [stomping)]...

[Sung] "Carry on my Wayward Son!"

This Prodigal is: The Stay at Home Son.

By **Prodigal** definition he is: excessive, intemperate, self-indulgent.

Parable: The second son, the brother who has been loyal and stayed on the farm, was devoted to the family livelihood and his father. When he receives the news of a party and fatted calf banquet being thrown for his brother who has returned, he is livid. This nature of bitterness reflects his own unhappiness. Yes, he has been devoted and loyal, but it has come at a price to him and this is revealed in the comparison and jealousy of never having been thrown so much as a mutton picnic to celebrate with his friends. You see, if he now feels the absence of gratitude or gratification, he reveals his heart and motives to have felt like those of a slave. Resentment and comparison are now stealing his joy, if he ever knew any. He addresses his overjoyed father's pleas for compassion with judgement and refusal to join in the celebration. His escaped brother is dead to him and there is no redemptive recovery. He has gotten word from those who saw his brother in the far away land and returned to relay the fact that he was living lavishly and lustfully. He now tells the father of the brother's sins to justify his objection and refusal to enter into any redeeming welcome. The father tries to make him understand the joy of this brother's resurrection and return to life. From the dead, he said! And the father points to this faithful son's absolute place with him and all he has. There is always room when a lost one is found. This self-comparing son... Winner [ding] or Loser [buzz]?

What if we suspended our judgment to see:

This elder son's axis is himself. He refuses to see the world from any point of view other than his own; revealing that hasn't stayed home to work as a calling or to be in his element. This farm and his role do not bring him enough. Although the allegory can personify him as loyal and maybe a winner, it is not devotion, and he has become bitter and hateful. And now he sees that if he had left, his father was still going to love him and offer him grace.

However, the parable does not tell us of his ultimate choice. It leaves us to wonder what his final answer will be. For us, prodigals that we are, we can hope for his redemptive turn to drop the resentful comparison, celebrate the inheritance that is big enough for everyone, and to respect without regret his personal choice to familial tradition, expectation and devotion. To see himself fulfilled as a rule follower and one gifted to inherit the family business and not just the profit. Admit that he is not a risk

taker and maybe even acknowledges his brother's sense of adventure. They are different boys turned men. We can picture their ancestral story being resurrected where he will fall weeping on the neck of his brother, as Esau to Jacob and lay his weary head to rest. It would only be in a repentant turn such as this that the resentful brother will realize:

He's had **enough of losing while working to win.**

Prodigal 3:

Now turning stone number three [stomping]...

[Sung] "Carry on my wayward son."

This Prodigal is: Surprisingly, the father.

By **Prodigal** definition, he is: lavish, generous, liberal, excessive, bountiful.

Parable: Once he sees his son returning through the field, he is filled with **compassion!** He runs to embrace him! The confession of sin against heaven and himself, has the father interrupting the son's practiced unworthiness part with the quick call for the robe, the ring, and the sandals that will visibly restore this son to his place in the family. At some point in the son's absence the father had to decide how to go on living with the grief that his adventurous son had likely died. When his weary head rises through the fields, the father is overjoyed before any confession is uttered.

This is the real focus of the parable. When Jesus is spinning it to the crowd, it is in response to the accusatory judgement of the Pharisees, the righteous priesthood of the Jews in Jesus' day, that this Jesus welcomes sinners to his table. Yes, the father is the allegory for forgiveness and extravagant love. And he will be criticized for this...by his own son for having no consequences! What audacity to think that someone could apologize and be restored, worse yet, even before the apology is uttered? This father is unprincipled, undisciplined, unfaithful to sacred tradition... This self-assured father... Winner [ding] or Loser [buzz]?

What if we suspended our judgment to see: Criticism can't change his mind; his love is unconditional. Sin and death are overcome, and nothing can separate his child from his love. Nothing. Love wins every time, all the time.

He is unbound, unbegrudging, unbelievably overcoming in supplying enough forgiveness that a win or a loss is not even in question. He's had **enough of losing while waiting to win.**

Alright Prodigal audience, it is time to roll away one last stone [stomping]...

[Sung] "Carry on my Wayward Son!"

This Prodigal is: The Community

By **Prodigal** definition, it is: intemperate, excessive, unsparing

Parable: You see this choice that the son made to ask for his inheritance while his father was still alive and to leave the tribe was an unforgiveable disgrace to the entire culture. As the community watched the son go and heard of this utter disregard, they judged him. No doubt the older son found comrades in the disdain among his community friends at the end of his long days of work.

No doubt their stony tweets and face space scowls had them all walking around with 'he's dead to us' tears in their jeans and hateful postings that falsely elevated their own pious status in comparison to his depravity. The self-righteous community... Winner [ding] or Loser [buzz]?

What if we suspended our judgment to see:

The brilliant move on the father's part was to invite the community to an irresistible banquet table. Eating the meat, the bread of forgiveness and drinking the wine of compassion united them and swept them into the joy of the father. The parable doesn't say that any faction of them was outside the banquet hall with the angry brother. And again, we can hope that at some moment after the biblical parable ends, Jesus is asking us all, every one of us, to hope that the banquet hall door swings open and the room is complete as they cheer the welcome of **All** with the entry of the restored brother.

Conclusion

Well that's it for "Bible Times Winners or Losers." Thanks for playing.

We have found one thing in common with each prodigal definition, the word *excessive*. So here are your studio audience pearls of prize. Whenever we feel the weight of excessiveness...

be it our:

Self-indulgence

Self comparison

Self-assuredness

Self-righteousness

Lay your weary head to rest on God's chest, be done with it,

1. Replace the judgment *from or toward you* with compassion.
2. Know that comparison steals your joy.

For today, ENOUGH has no winners or losers.

God *runs* to embrace us as beloved and well, prodigal.

There'll be peace when you are done.

Amen, Amen!