



WEEKLY STUDY

God Loves Lost Things - Week Three

We are in the third week of Advent. And we're just over a week away from Christmas! This week's message focused on the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. Our heavenly Father has made a way for us to be received back into His home through His Son born at Christmas.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: LUKE 15.11-24 (ESV)

And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" ²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³

And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

- Most times when I read this parable from Jesus, I want to scold the younger son. I want to find a way to change his mind. So disrespectful. So wasteful. But in all honesty, there are ways in which I have been disrespectful to God who has given me so much. I've taken steps down the path that leads away from my home with God. I've also experienced the undeserved embrace of God, welcoming me home. What parts of the younger son's story do you relate to? What speech of repentance would you/have you offered to God?
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- **Prayer Prompt:** *The wicked flee though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion. (Proverbs 28.1)*
- *God, I want to have the boldness of a returning son. I turn my heart towards you today. Help me to stay focused on my home with you. Amen.*

TUESDAY: LUKE 15.11-24 (ESV)

- The younger son asked for his share of the estate that would normally come to him after his father died. This would have amounted to $\frac{1}{3}$ of his father's property. The other $\frac{2}{3}$ or a double portion would belong to the eldest son. This was a legal precedent. In order to give the younger son his inheritance, a portion of the estate would have to be liquidated. How would it feel to have such a permanent action mark your decision to walk away from your family? Have you ever made a decision that you later regretted but continue to live with the impact? God's forgiveness restores us but doesn't always remove the impact of our sin. Our peace comes from accepting the impact of our sin as the Father has. He chooses to love us anyway. Reflect on that gift from God.
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- **Prayer Prompt:** *Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139.7-10)*

- *Jesus, you are God's Way of offering forgiveness to my wandering heart. Help me as I sometimes struggle to live into my new identity as a forgiven and loved child. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: LUKE 15.11-24 (ESV)

- The younger son squandered his inheritance. He just let it go without a thought or promise of return. He didn't invest it in anything of lasting value. It has been said that the father spent his love (which is unending) in a way that looked reckless. But his reckless spending of love was an investment in something of lasting value—his son. God invests his love in us, His sons and daughters, without a promised return. He must see lasting value in us. How will you respond to that kind of love?

- **Prayer Prompt:** *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,³⁹ 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. (Romans 8.38-39)*
- *God, your love chases after me. I turn my heart in your direction and you are always ready to embrace me. I want you to see great returns on your investment of love for me. Amen.*

THURSDAY: LUKE 15.11-24 (ESV)

- When someone acts in a way that harms us, we feel quite justified in cutting them off. Sometimes it is necessary for us to set boundaries that prevent them from harming us again. To be clear, we are not God. God would be justified by the world's standards in cutting us off when we walk away from Him. He could protect his heart from further harm. But God's heart could experience no deeper grief than the death of his Son on a cross. And so God continues to welcome us home. He's already paid the price and paved the driveway for our return. Even if necessary boundaries exist, is there forgiveness that you would like to offer someone else? Have you fully embraced the forgiveness that God has offered you?

- **Prayer Prompt:** *Let the one who walks in the dark,
who has no light,*

*trust in the name of the LORD
and rely on their God. (Isaiah 50.10)*

- *Jesus, I want to walk in the light. I trust in your grace. Amen.*

FRIDAY: LUKE 15.11-24 (ESV)

- The younger son, after squandering his father's inheritance, quickly finds himself in a downward spiral. First a famine comes. Then he has to lower himself and take a job. Even then he can find no one who will show him mercy. He is hungry. Desperately hungry. Have you ever hit rock bottom? What moments of desperation have helped you to face the reality of your situation? Why is it so difficult to stop the downward spiral on our own?

- **Prayer Prompt:** *I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding. (Psalm 119.32)*
- *God, increase my wisdom and help me to see the direction in which I am headed. Today I choose the path of your commands. Amen.*

SATURDAY: LUKE 15.11-24 (ESV)

- In verse 17, the younger son came to himself. He came to his senses. What had been true all along suddenly came into full view. His father's house was filled with people, even servants, who had plenty to eat. They didn't have to fight with pigs for food. The father's house had everything they needed to live. He wasn't imagining luxury, he was looking for survival. This moment of realization led him to the path of repentance. A hard road for sure, but the only one that offered him any hope. Who are the prodigals in the world around you? Is it you? Is there something far better that is just waiting for our return?

- **Prayer Prompt:** *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6.33)*
- *God, I have pursued many things. The one thing I need is you. I seek your kingdom. I seek your righteousness. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. (Matthew 1.24)

Read [Matthew 1.18-24](#).

Reread Luke 15.11-24.

- Was Joseph's response to Mary's pregnancy understandable? Was it typical?
- In what ways did Joseph's story reflect the extravagant grace of the Father in the parable of the Prodigal Son?
- It seems that the Christmas story hinges on several moments of grace. What other moments are contained in the story?
- What moments of grace does your story hinge on?