

“And He said, A certain man had two sons.” Luke 15:10

THE SECOND SON

by Craig Marlatt

I love to read the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:10-32. Probably because I myself spent so much time chasing after my own sinful desires *and “. . .wasted [my] substance with riotous living”* before I found rest in Christ. This parable accurately describes most of the people that I grew up with. We were all just a bunch of runaway sons enjoying ourselves and having a good time all day long.

I don't know how many times I have preached or have heard someone else preach this sermon in a church or rescue mission, but it always seems as if there is at least one prodigal in every crowd who can attest to the validity of this scripture passage. In my own ministry I've seen hundreds who fit the bill perfectly who are running away from their Heavenly Father; trying to fill the void of an empty life with the substance of the world. Praise the Lord that I have also seen some return to their Father to be received and restored again.

For a moment though let's go back to verse eleven in the parable and we will see someone who rarely draws the attention of the preacher or reader. *“A certain man had two sons...”* Indeed this other son must have been somewhat important to our Lord or he would not have been mentioned in the scripture. Apparently this second (elder) son was a good boy. He worked faithfully, served his father, kept his fathers rules, and of course he also had an inheritance coming to him from his father. When his younger brother ran away in search of worldly pleasures he remained behind to take care of his fathers fields. That he was a fine son there is little doubt.

Day after day he would see his father anxiously looking out across the valley near their farm, hopefully awaiting the return of the wayward son. “Why does he so concern himself?”, he must have thought. “Good riddance to that useless brother of mine.” But his fathers heart was filled with the hope that soon his lost son would return from his wanderings. “I don't understand why he still cares”, the older brother must have mused to himself, but nothing could change the fathers love.

Then one day, while the father stood looking out across the hills as he did now every day, there seemed to be a figure of someone slowly moving up the roadway that brought travelers from the far country. “Could this be my son?”, he thought to himself, overcome with excitement and expectation. “Alas, my prayers have been answered. My son is coming home again.” And sure enough, as this lone wanderer drew nearer, he recognized the familiar gait of his young son, once so lively and joyous, but now as though belonging to someone carrying the weight of the whole world upon himself. “Look yonder!”, he cried to a servant who stood nearby, “my son has returned from his wandering. Make ready the fatted calf, bring a new robe, a ring, and shoes for his weary feet. Let us make merry on this joyous occasion for my son was lost but now he is found.”

While the elder brother was working in the fields he heard the sound of merriment coming from the direction of his house. Upon inquiry he was told that his brother had returned and that his father was calling for a time of celebration and desiring all to come

and join them. At this he became angry, "I worked faithfully and you never gave me a big party", he cried to his father. "This young roustabout who has squandered your hard earned money is not worthy of celebration. What about me?" To which his father replied, "*It is meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again: and was lost and is found*" (verse 32).

You might wonder what all this has to do with you. Maybe you've been a good church member all of your life and you've never strayed away from the teachings of your parents. Maybe you've wondered why everyone gets so excited about the drunk, or drug addict who gets saved, while nobody hardly mentions the ones, like yourself, who have been good Christians all of their lives. Do you rejoice when a lost son comes home, or do you wonder why the Father even bothers with him? Can you make merriment with the Father and his angels when a prostitute finds Jesus as her Lord, or do you bitterly stand outside alone, kept from such joy by your own self-righteousness?

I wonder which son was really the faithful one in the fathers eyes? I'm reminded of another parable about two men found in Luke 18:10-14. One was a Pharisee and the other a Publican. They both went up to the temple to pray and the Pharisee prayed in this manner: "*God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess.*" *And the publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*"

Who can understand the great mercy of God? His love for us does not depend upon the kind of person that we are. His love is the same for the gutter bum as it is for the saint. As for me, I praise God that He loved me when I was lost in the far country. There are others who are coming home, even today. Won't you come and make merriment with the Father? His lost sons are returning from afar.