

SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON

(Luke 15:11-32)

The features that have been mentioned as being characteristic of the previous two Sundays, namely, happiness and its loss, are repeated also by this Sunday. The sole idea of this Sunday is the ascension; man's rise from fall and his return to the place from where he was expelled. This Sunday and the two Sundays following it take their names from the main parables included in the lections of those days.

According to the central parable of this Sunday, the "younger son" of a happy family desires to leave his father's home for a far country. As Adam and Eve, so also this young man was not satisfied with what he had and enjoyed. In other words, this boy does not know and consequently can not appreciate the value of what he owns and therefore he wishes after the pleasures of a "far country".

After some time the Prodigal Son lost almost everything he had – riches, beauty and honor. He had willingly lost the presence of a father and the sweetness of a home. He who had started his expectations to obtain a better life found himself in dire poverty and in the company of swine. All these miseries, however, made it possible for him to find the most important thing, that is, the appreciation of what he had enjoyed previously. Besides being starved the Prodigal Son is now immensely in need of his father's love and is longing for his home. His father's love, which he feels now only in its entire purity, attracts him as does a magnetic force. He desires to be with his father and family – if not even as a "son", at least as a "hired servant". The discovery of the values he has lost, forces him to become roused and forsake the company of the pigs.

The center of gravity of the parable lies in these words: "I will rise and go to my father". These words contain the whole meaning of the Sunday. The rest is a familiar story. The Prodigal Son, restored in his former position and happiness, now is minded of what he possesses, that is, his father's riches. We may say, he has become a steward managing the properties of the family.

Hence, next Sunday contains the parable of the Steward.



Objectives:

Students should be able to tell the story of the Prodigal Son in their own words
Students should know that God forgives us even when we do something we shouldn't.

Lesson Plan:

Open with prayer.

Scripture Reference: Luke 15: 11-32. Where did the son go? What did he do with his money? Where did he end up« doing what? Why did he go back to his father? What did he say? What did his father say? Let's look a bit at the older brother. He stayed at home obedient. Where was he when the younger brother returned? What did he hear as he approached the house? How did he feel about all the celebration? Why? What did the father do when the older brother wouldn't come to the party? What did the father say? How did the brother respond?

Play a learning game: Word Jumble. Give each student a pad and pencil. Have your chalkboard or large tablet ready. Ask the question and then write the scrambled answer on the board. Give the students 30-60 seconds to write their answer on their tablet and go on to the next question:

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| (1) I was supposed to be given away when the father died© What am I? | THENECIARNI |
| (2) I left my family to go to the city. Who am I? | GRAPOLID SNO |
| (3) I am a shortage of food. What am I? | MEFNIA |
| (4) I gave the prodigal son a job. Who am I? | GPI NOREW |
| (5) I was given to the prodigal son when he returned. What am I? | GIRN |
| (6) I forgave the prodigal son. Who am I? | SHE TREAFFH |
| (7) I did not waste my inheritance. Who am I? | DOREL OSN |
| (8) I was called on to prepare a feast. Who am I? | NEVSTAR |

Talk a bit about the words "I'm sorry": These are powerful words. When do we say them? Have the children think of some times they have said them or heard someone else say them. What do we mean by saying "I'm sorry"? Did the Prodigal Son say« "I'm sorry"? How did the father respond? How do we respond when someone says they are sorry? Sometimes it's not so easy to forgive. What if your friend broke your favorite toy and said« "I'm sorry"? Is it easy to forgive when the toy is still broken?

Take a pigpen pledge: Review the story. The Prodigal Son was in the pigpen. He realized his sin and his father's love – then he had to take a step. He had to get up and leave the pigpen and take a step towards his father! Picture this with the students. Then have each in preparation for Lent consider his or her own pigpen. What one single step can he or she take during Great Lent to move towards the Lord? Increased prayer time? Scripture reading each day? Lenten services? Improved fasting? Visiting the sick? Let each student actually write down the step he will take to draw nearer to the Father.

