

# The Prodigal!

## Overview

And for Peter Waringa, as he's recovering now from hip surgery, we pray, O Father God, that his progress will be astounding to the doctors. We look forward to him one more time coming into this house and causing us to shout and shout and shout victory. We thank you for his life. And for so many other people who are struggling and having such difficulty with their bodies, we just lift them all up before you. There's people wanting to be here today that cannot be here because they're troubled in their bodies. They're just struggling. And so, Lord Jesus, we lift them all before you. We commend them to you. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. And everyone said, amen.

In a moment, I'm going to invite my helpers to put up scriptures, but not yet. I want to read to you just a little bit to kind of set the stage. Luke 15 is probably my favorite chapter in the whole Bible. I hope I didn't say that before. I have a few chapters that I love, and this one is high, high, high on my list. It's Luke's Gospel, chapter 15. So I'll begin to read it. You know it ever so well. It begins this way. Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to him to hear him. And when the Pharisees and the scribes complained, saying, this man receives sinners and even eats with them, in response, Jesus spoke a parable.

You know the parables ever so well. There's the parable of the lost coin. There's the parable before that of a lost sheep. One hundred sheep, one goes missing. Only one person cares about that sheep. Only one man went out that night, risked his life, and he searched until he found the sheep. Brought it home, called all of his friends. Probably three o'clock in the morning. When's the last time you got a call at three o'clock in the morning? Come on over to my house. I've ordered pizza, pizza, and I've got all the ginger ale we could ever enjoy.

Three o'clock. Oh, okay. What's happened, Dave? You know my little doggie, Sophie? She ran away, but she just came and knocked on the door. She's home. She's home. Come on over and celebrate. You all would beat a path to my door, I know. We've all joy kibbles with our dog. That's how silly the story sounds.

He goes out and he searches for a sheep. He had 99. Leave them alone and they'll multiply like mice. But no, he risks his life because he valued that sheep. He went alone. Shepherds will lay their lives down for their sheep, not for other sheep. When he brought that sheep home, he was so overcome with joy. He valued that sheep. Second story is about a woman with 10 coins. Not ordinary coins. If somebody had found that coin that was lost, one in 10 was lost. If someone had found that coin, it would have been useless to them. I spent hours in theological libraries and here's what I discovered. Ten special coins that were minted in a very special situation where a craftsman would put together 10 coins.

And each one of them would be etched in some kind of mention. The first coin might have said, and by the way, the coins would have become a family heirloom where the mother would have passed it to the daughter, to the daughter would pass it to her daughter, generation after generation. How many generations held these 10 coins on the hour, the day of a wedding? The first coin might have been something like this, may your years be filled with laughter and joy. Maybe the second one, may your womb give forth many wonderful children. May your days be long and this and that. May your husband's farm reap much and much. And so somebody would have said, these are the things that I want to pass on.

These are hope for us. May these things happen to you. But now there's a woman who had these 10 coins that was given to her by, over the generations it came down to her, and she somehow got careless and one was missing. She tore her house apart until she found it. She's the only one who valued it. If anyone else had found it, it would have been no good. There were no antique coin collectors in those days. It would have been useless, useless, but she valued it. And when she found it, she called all her friends, come to my house. You're going to want to see my coin. The people who came to the shepherd's house, how many kissed the sheep on the lips?

The party wasn't for the sheep. Look at this. Look, look, look, look, look. The party was not for the sheep. The sheep was not present. It was put with the rest of the sheep. Hello? And the coin, the coin was centric to the woman who lost it. It meant everything to her, but to the people who came. Why did they come? They wanted to celebrate with her.

The people who came to the shepherd's house, they were there to celebrate with him. It didn't matter what he was celebrating. He had such respect. He carried himself with such dignity. Everybody knew what those sheep meant to him. And so they came, but the sheep was not invited. Now, we're going to embark on a third story. I want to begin this way. Then all the tax collectors, I already read it. Then all the tax collectors and the sinners came near to him. They wanted to hear him.

And the Pharisees, the righteous people, the pastors, and the scribes, the assistant pastors complained, this man is doing business with sinners. Disgraceful. He's no man of God. He should be separate from them. And in response, Jesus told one more story. Why don't you read it over with me. I'll read the first verse. You read the second. And we're going to go all the way down to verse 32. And he said, a certain man had two sons. And not many days after the son gathered all together, he took his journey into a far country.

And there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And he went and he joined himself to a citizen of that country. And he sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. We're down to three people now who are eating. I want everybody to come back in the room. And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my fathers have bread enough and to spare? And I am perishing with hunger. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Just make me one of your hired servants. What a picture. The son replies, father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight.

I'm not worthy to be called your son. And bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let's eat and let's celebrate. Now the elder son was out in the field. But as he came near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he said unto him, your brother has come and your father has killed the fatted calf because he received him safe and sound. And he answered to his father, all these years I've served you. I never sinned. I never embarrassed you at any time. Not one commandment. And yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.

And he said unto him, son, you are always with me and everything that I have is yours. What's the next verse say? There isn't one. Have you ever watched a movie and when it got to the end, you said, ah, the movie never ends. Like, I've got to have a side to my wife. What a waste of time. I don't even know how it ends. And of course, somebody says, it can end any way you want to. This story does not end any way you want to. This story ends in tragedy. How do you know that, Pastor Dave?

I'm glad you asked. I'm ready to tell you. Jesus tells these three stories and the number of things that he's telling them boggles my mind. This is an incredible passage. This is the gospel in a nutshell. And it's a warning to the Pharisees. Here's Jesus trying to minister to the runaways. And the Pharisees, being the elder brother, upset with the father for chasing the younger brother and bringing him back. It's an incredible picture. Did you know that Christianity originally was not seen or observed as another religion? The Romans called these Christians atheists.

Their God is no God. Their God is not like any other God that we know. This is ridiculous. You're atheists. And you know why? Because everything that Jesus came and taught was diametrically opposite to every religion of the world and still is. I don't care if I get in trouble for this. I Googled this this week. You can Google it for yourself. How has Allah shown his love to the Muslims? What an empty box I received on that one.

Well, if the people do right, he's going to love them. That is essentially what it says. If they do right, if they love him first, he will consider loving them is what it's inferring. Oh, no, no, that's not what it means. Well, tell me what it means. There's no God like your God, the son of Allah. He doesn't have one. The son of Allah never came and died for the people. The word of God tells us we love him because he first loved us. He initiated this love relationship and the Romans could not figure this out. Why would a God, if he has a son, why would a king who has a son, a king upset with everybody in this country, they all deserve to die.

But no, my son can die instead. Well, what's wrong with this son? Was this kind of like a double whammy? He was upset with all of the people, but he doesn't like his son anyway. So he has his son killed. No, no, no, no, no. For God so loved the world that he chose to give his only begotten son. So compared to all other religions, Christianity makes no sense whatsoever. This is an inverted religion. You want to be saved, give up. You want to win, begin by losing.

You upset with your enemies, get on your knees and pray for them. You don't like the taxes, give an extra dollar. Well, don't go that far. This Christian God is weird. And the Pharisees, totally respectful of all that they knew from the Torah, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, that was their capstone.

That was what they based their lives on. And they could not find in here that God had a son in the first place. And that if he did, he wasn't going to give up his son for us miserable sinners. The poor people in this story are bad. And the people who have claimed it and said the prayer right, say it and claim it, they were the good ones. There were bad people, there were good people.

That's what the very first verse says. The tax collectors and the sinner. You know who the tax collectors were? They were Jews hired by the Romans to collect the taxes. And the whole system was totally corrupt. The tax collector could collect anything that he wanted. And if you didn't pay the tax collector who got a nice slice of the bread as it was collected, if you didn't pay him, he could put you in jail for the rest of your life, ruthless. And here he was one of us. So the Pharisees look upon the tax collectors as the worst of the sinners. And the fact that this Jesus would sit down and have beef stew with these tax collectors was just unforgivable. Jesus had spent time with us.

God loves us. We're his special ones. Haven't you read it? We are the chosen people. We're the best. In Luke 15, we have some audiences. We have the tax collectors who were considered sinners. And then the sinners were also there. So they weren't just the tax collectors. There were some prostitutes in the gang. There were some shysters.

There were some businessmen that couldn't be trusted. There were wife beaters. There were child molesters. There were wicked people. I had a congregation with a ton of those people. I never told the rest of the congregation for fear they'd send them out. There was a time when I passed at a large church, don't ask me the city, but the downtown of that city had a lot of very, very poor people. And I got a couple of my Sunday school buses, we had 15 of them, I sent two of the Sunday school buses into that part of the town, and we hustled people to come to our church on a Sunday night. Do you know what my board said after about four Sundays? We don't like these dirty people in our church. They're not of us.

And one of them said, if you want those people in this church, you can rope off a section for them and give them all a bar of soap. I went home that night after a board meeting and I said to April, I love the sinners more than I love the saints. And I said, we're not long here. And I didn't stay much longer. I couldn't handle the stench of their brand of religiosity because it was not an inverted concept. The inverted concept is love the poor, love the filthy, go out into the highway. You know what that means? Go out into the ditches, go and lobby outside the beer hall. And when he comes out drunk as a skunk, offer him a cup of coffee and take him to church. So here we had the good people, the Pharisees and those who worked with them. And then we had these wicked tax collectors and sinners.

These people are represented in Jesus' story. Not in the first story, not in the second. You don't see it as clearly in the sheep and the shepherd. You don't see it as clearly as in the coin and the woman. But you see, it's clear as day. A man had a son, two of them, two of them. And the one demanded his inheritance now. In essence, what he was saying to his dad, I know I'm supposed to get one third of all that you've ever earned, everything that you have. I get one third of it. After you die, well, I'm not waiting for you to die. And I want my portion now.

The law was at that time, the first son, the eldest son, would inherit the responsibility over the entire clan. As long as the family got larger and larger, the eldest son was in charge. So he got a double portion of the father's wealth. And everybody else in the family, if there were 10 sons, the first born would get one third of everything and the rest, no, he would get the two thirds of everything. And the younger son with the other eight brothers, nine of them, would share the third portion. The first son gets a double of everything. So the younger son wants his third and he demands it now. He was eager. He was not willing to wait till his dad passed. Now in the mind of the Pharisee, this would have been terrible, that that boy would carry on like that. And they would have preferred in their story that the dad did not do what he did.

They would have preferred that he would beat that boy within an inch of his life and chase him out of the house and say, I disown you, never come back to this house again. What a horrible thing. You want me to die? Pharisees were upset as they heard this story. You know, what really ticked them off was that the dad not only complied, but think about it. They didn't have a Royal Bank or a TD. Where was this old man's, where was his money? It was wrapped up in camels, horses, sheep and property. So he literally sold one third of his entire farm. This is an interesting concept. We're hearing about it in our country right now and they're not going to get it.

It's become a political hotbed, you know, out in BC where there's people out there that were here before us. And this is what they say. Not only do we own this land, but this land owns us. We belong to this land. And for us to give up any portion of it is to give up part of our life. We are one with the soil, we're one with the nature. You can deal with that any way you want to, but that is a cultural thing. What this man did back then was he did an unthinkable thing. And I promise you, everybody who is his neighbor and people as far and wide, the story would have gone for miles. People who never heard of him heard all about him. Can you believe that that man sold one third of his life and gave it to that wretched kid?

Have you heard what the kid did with that? Have you heard what the kid did with that man's blood, sweat and tears? That daddy got that piece of property as a result of the 12 tribes. I won't bore you with the details, but this portion of Israel goes to this tribe. This portion goes to this tribe. And then the families, elders all got together and they divided up those portions among their tribe or among their family. So this man had inherited this property from his dad and from his dad and from his dad. Sounds like the coin? Sounds like the coin? And that this woman would show up at a wedding and say, darling, I'm sorry that the tenth coin hasn't gone, hasn't been given to you. The whole audience would be, what?

And that this man would give away a third of his life. It cost him really everything. It cost him his reputation. And without saying a word, he gave it to his son. Well, we know what the son did with it. A humiliated dad sits weeping and he had plans for his son. When my first girl was born, I had plans for her. When my son was born, I was so proud. Take him to six o'clock in the morning hockey. My brain was frozen, let alone my fingers. Six o'clock in the morning to take your kid to skate.

We bought him a pair of skates. And when I traded the men at a store where you could, you know, turn in a five and pick up a size six, the owner of the store was delighted.

He said, well, these skates, the blade is like brand new. But he said, the leather is all scuffed up and beat up. My kid never got to stand up on the blade. You know, he's like this. I remember one man standing when this kid literally had the puck and he fell on it. And the man beside me said, wouldn't you be horrified if you were that kid's father? I said, I can't even imagine. I came home from Africa. What was it?

Three o'clock in the morning. I awake. I don't know what awoke me. And there standing at the end of my bed was my son, 17 years of age. And he's sobbing. He says, Dad, how did you know that God had called you? I don't want that kind of a conversation at three o'clock in the morning. And I said, what's going on, Dave? He said, I think I've been praying tonight at three o'clock in the morning, been praying and praying. I said, what's prompted you to pray? I don't know.

What's moving you? I don't know, Dad. I can't sleep. I'm just praying, saying, God, what do you want? What do you want? I said, you're hearing his voice. Get back to your prayer closet. I said, you'll know. Beating within my breast was so much excitement. It wasn't my plan that he'd become a preacher. It was God's plan and I was so touched by that.

What plans did this daddy have? All went up in smoke. The son is partying with this man's living and he's at home. He's at home. It's humiliating. His name is Sully. The son made such a demand. The father complied. The Pharisees in this story hate the story, but their hate turns into venom. Because when the son is coming home, like I spent time overseas, I spent time with another culture. You listen to Pastor David, been there, done that.

The daddy never runs to the son. He sits in his chair. The daddy's chair is a throne. I'm sitting in a home in India with a man who's 35 years of age. His father walks into the room. The 35-year-old jumps to his feet and the daddy says, fine, that meant it's okay, you can sit. Why did the son jump to his feet? Maybe my dad needs something. Maybe my dad wants tea. Maybe my dad needs me to go to the market. Maybe, maybe, maybe, maybe.

He's going to stand there until he hears. The daddy never moves. Here's this rotten son who has sullied his father's reputation. And he's coming home dressed in rags and stinking like pigs. And a man who should have been sitting there like royalty, sitting on a throne, still filthy rich, one third gone, trust me, the two thirds were still humongous. But it says, he ran. He ran. Pharisees would say, you don't run for a rat like that. You're just like that Jesus. The tax collectors and the sinners, filth. Son, I'm not worthy to be called your son.

He ignored that. He totally ignored it. I'm not worthy to be called your son. And the old man says to his servant, quick, kill the fatted calf. Let me tell you, that little piece, kill the fatted calf, is one of the biggest moments in this story. I went with Harold Minor. We went to the foot of Mount Kenya. I preached for three days in a row. We saw so many people come to Jesus. The pastors of the tiny little churches were out of their minds with excitement. The morning came and we're going to head back to Nairobi. And Harold said, David, we've got to make a stop at the pastor's house that we were preaching at two nights ago. I said, fine. We pulled in. And there stands this little pastor. And he's got these children, like stair steps.

Like how many were there? I didn't take time to count. It was like a football team. And then here's this little bedraggled wife standing there, probably going to get ready to give another one. Oh, what do I know? Living in a mud house, the roof is made of grass.

Poverty stricken. One of the sons is standing there with a stock of sugar cane. You know what that would be worth in the market? To you and I, very little. But it probably would buy him a loaf of bread, standing there with a sugar cane. Another son is standing there and he's cradling a chicken. And these two young fellows came and presented a sugar cane and a chicken. I like my chicken on a spit. I don't like handling them. I don't like chickens. I raise pigs, horses, cows.

Chickens, I can't tell you. I just don't like them. And so I said, no, no, no, no, no. And Harold said, take the chicken. I said, I can't do that. Like, what am I going to do with a chicken? He said, I have a plan. I said, Harold, these people are poor. He looked at me, said, David, this is one of the highest moments in their pastoral life. Mzungu came from Canada and preached his heart out and probably saw their little congregation double or triple in a matter of hours. They want to honor you, David, and you can't dishonor.

You have to receive that gift. How long would it take to replace that chicken and prepare a dinner? That isn't even part of the question. How often do these people even eat meat? Very, very seldom. They can't afford it. They need the eggs. And they can trade the eggs for somebody else who has a cow that's fresh and is giving milk. Everything is priceless among them. For this man to kill the fatted calf, that's big news. They're not having chicken dinner.

They're having roast beef. That is huge. And you hear the son saying later, the elder son, you slaughtered the best calf in our whole herd and you didn't offer me a goat. No, wait a minute. You never gave me a baby goat. I'm tormented by how you're treating this boy. He refused to call his brother, brother. This, your son. I'm not worthy, daddy. I'm not worthy. And I can hear the dad saying, you're my son.

You're my son. We're going to have a party. No party, dad. No party, no party. And I can hear the dad at least muttering it, if not saying it. How long ago did you leave out this gate with one third of everything that I owned? You went to a not so very far away. And I heard stories about how you spent what I had given you. You spent that entire time partying while I sat here and wept. You had your party. I'm going to have mine and you're going to attend.

You're going to be there. You're going to honor me. By the way, why did those people come and honor that daddy? Because they love the son? Are you thinking? They came to honor the father. You take that father out of that story and you don't have a story. You say, well, of course, there has to be a father. No, no, no, no. That father. Take that father out.

If your son ran away, he's in Montreal, he's gone nuts. And you're going to ask me to give up a week of my life and go and try and find him? And try and force him to come home when he doesn't want to come home? In your dreams, you want to go, you go. Shepherd, you want to go and chase that sheep, you go ahead.

You might get killed, a wolf will get you. You care, you go. Why do missionaries go to the far side of the world and risk their lives? Why? Because they have a relationship with the father. They don't go because they feel a warmth and a love for those poor sinners over there in that other country. No, no, no, no, no, no. Without a relationship with the father, there is no missionary. Without a relationship with the heavenly father, there's no preacher. It's all about relationship with the father. And we've got two sons, watch this. We have two sons that have no relationship. This is not about one prodigal bro, this is about two. Because the elders ticked off that daddy would pay attention to this rotter. So they spent \$1,000 or more on their celebration. The dad says, when I'm gone son, you get the millions. What is wrong with you?

All that I have is yours. That's what Jesus said to Jerusalem as he came into the city. You've read it. Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem. Who was living in Jerusalem? People who had no time for Jesus. People who were not living according to the book. People who were destined to die, them or their children, their grandchildren. In 40 years, these people in Jerusalem are going to die if they don't surrender to Christ. Jerusalem, Jerusalem. Pharisees, scribes, the filthiest of prostitutes, the wicked tax collectors.

How often I would have put my arms around you and love you into the Father's hand, but you'd have none of it. And here that I'm reaching out to some people who've shown up, tax collectors, sinners, the worst of the tribe. They come and they say, we love this man, let's listen to him. And you, the self-righteous Pharisees, are ticked off that I give one minute to these poor sinners. Wow. Just make me one of your workers. Don't call me son. He's saying to him, you don't even have to put me up in a servant's quarters. Would you hire me to be like an apprentice to one of your best workers? I'll live in the town and I will earn my way back. Not to your sonship, but somehow I want to pay restitution. Somehow, somehow I want to pay. And the daddy says, no payback, son. You can't restore what was lost, but I can restore you. One third is gone, but I can restore you. He was welcomed back and he paid not one cent. And the people came not to see the restored son. They would stay away from him. They don't want to be seen with him, guilt by association. Keep your daughter away from him. He'll turn her into a harlot. They didn't trust this boy.

Why should they? The stories that came back were incredible. They had no reason to trust him. They had no reason to come to the party except this. They love the father. They don't understand him. Think about this. He gives his angels charge over you. I mean this kindly. I don't mean to be crude, but I have an idea that when angels were told, go and look after David, they were kind of like this. Oh no, Dave, the angels love us.

Oh, we're called filthy. Rotten to the core. And let me tell you something. In response of their love to the father, they look after you. But the angels don't love you. For only God so loved the world. Only God could love you in the condition you were in. Only God could do that. The angels do his bidding because he's the father and they will give their life for him. Do you know how special you are? You're not a tax collector. You're not a horrible sinner. You're one of the good sinners, I'm sure. I am. I'm a really good one. Your brother came home. You killed the calf. You've gone crazy. The younger son humiliated his dad when he left. The older son humiliated his dad when the younger came home. I'm going to close with this picture.

In this picture, if you read it as a Pharisee, you see the Pharisees as the good guys. Okay? And if you see their story, father and their son, as it begins at the top of the chapter, they're complaining. You see the older son is a good guy because he stayed home and he made the point. We just read it. Tell me a day when I let you down. Tell me a day when I said in your dreams. Tell me a day when I said I wish you were dead. I always honored you. He was a good, good, good godly man. And then there are those rotten, horrible tax collectors and those sinners that are over here. You had a good son that stayed home and you had a bad son who left.

Watch this. At the end of the story, the bad son has repented and he's become a good son. And the good guy at the end of the story has become the bad guy. Huh? Which side are you on? I'm a good one. No. There are none good. No. Not. But for God's grace. But for God's grace. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The angels think we're all tax collectors. We're rip off artists. But he has put his finger on you. He's put his robe on you. And he's throwing a party. He's throwing a party in your honor. But the angels and the elders are gathering in his honor. Because they don't even begin to understand what he sees in me. They don't understand it.

If they did, they would be eternal deity. Isn't that special? Somebody said to me just a few hours ago, you've been such a man of God, David. And I replied, I said, Ron, I'm telling you out of my heart, out of the core of my being, I was always just a shovel. I'm just a shovel. I'm just a shovel. Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord. That's for every one of us. And we shall wear a crown. We shall wear a crown. We shall wear a crown. Stand with me. And just, Linda, would you come on your keyboard? Stand with me, okay, everybody? In my head, I've already closed three times. It's okay. Then sings my soul. Then sings my soul. Won't you sing this with me? Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee. How great thou art.

Feel checked. I can't close. Just a moment. Just every head bowed, please. No one looking around. I think the Lord is saying there's somebody in this room, you haven't yet surrendered your heart to Jesus. If that's you, I'm not going to embarrass you, but I need to know who you are so I can pray for you, okay? I'm not going to center you out. I just need to know. Just lift a hand. Say nothing. Do nothing. Just lift a hand. Say, it's me, Dave. I invite you to pray for me as you close. No pressure. I'm not going to push. I'm not an auctioneer. It's my responsibility to invite you.

Gracious Father, I pray over all of these people today that in humble submission we will acknowledge that sometimes we might be in the wrong crowd. We become quite content with who we are in you, but there's a blind spot in our rear view mirror. Point it out to us, Lord, so we can become reconciled to you.

Shall we continue in grace? Shall we continue in our sin so that grace may abound? No, no, no. We shall not continue in sin so God can forgive us. No, we will give up our sinful ways and acknowledge him. So thank you, Lord Jesus, for searching in our hearts.

If there be any wicked me, check my spirit and reorganize me, I pray.

In Jesus' name, amen.