

## The Parable of the Lost Son

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

<sup>22</sup> "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

<sup>28</sup> "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

<sup>31</sup> "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

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# Study Notes (from NLT Study Bible):

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Luke 15:11-32

Like the previous two parables ([15:3-7](#), [8-10](#)), the parable of the lost son demonstrates God's love for the lost and the joy he experiences when they return. It also allegorizes Jesus' ministry. The father represents God, the younger brother represents the tax collectors and sinners to whom Jesus ministered, and the older brother represents the religious leaders.

Luke 15:12

*I want my share of your estate now:* This appalling request essentially says, "To me, you are dead." There could be no greater insult to a father.

Luke 15:13

*He wasted all his money in wild living:* Jews considered the loss of family property to Gentiles in a distant land to be particularly disgraceful and grounds for excommunication (see also [Deut 21:18-21](#)).

Luke 15:15

*Pigs* were unclean animals ([Lev 11:7](#); [Deut 14:8](#)), making this the most degrading job imaginable for a Jew.

Luke 15:20

*his father saw him coming:* His father was apparently watching the road, longing for his son's return. • he ran to his son: Running was considered undignified for the family patriarch, but the father was full of unbridled joy at his son's return.

Luke 15:21

The son gave his rehearsed speech. Some manuscripts add *Please take me on as a hired servant*. The lack of this sentence in the better manuscripts suggests that his father did

Luke 15:22

*The finest robe* belonged to the father; it affirmed the son's role as an heir and a cherished member of the household. • Get a ring for his finger: A ring was a symbol of authority. Like the robe, it indicated his status as son and heir.

Luke 15:23

The father would have been fattening a calf for a banquet. The son was welcomed as a visiting dignitary.

Luke 15:28

*The older brother was angry* that his father would forgive such a sinner when he, the faithful son, had worked hard to achieve his position. Like the religious leaders, he refused to rejoice when his brother was found.

Luke 15:30

*this son of yours:* He refused to acknowledge his own relationship to his brother.

Luke 15:31

*you have always stayed by me:* The parable is open-ended: it does not record the older brother's response. The religious leaders still had a chance to respond to Jesus' offer of the Kingdom.