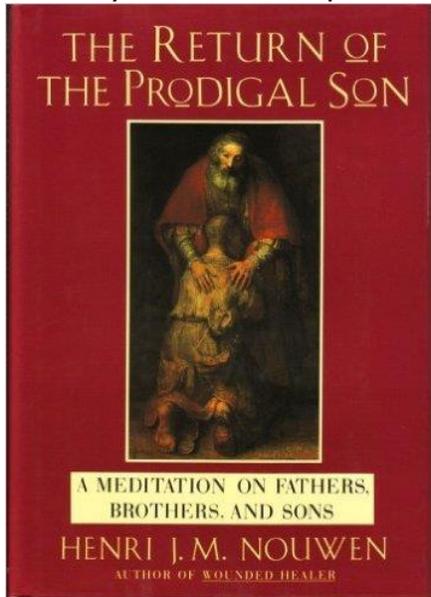


The Parable of the Loving and Merciful Father

On December 8th, Pope Francis opened the Year of Mercy.

Does any parable of Jesus better show God's Mercy than that of the Prodigal Son?

When you hear the parable Prodigal Son - What do you feel? My Story! - Show the Book!



Have you ever asked yourself, right now in my life which of the 3 characters best describes me?

Younger Son

- Wants his share now – show me the money.
- Father I cannot wait for you to die.
- How would you feel if you had a son or daughter who told that to you?
- Why did younger son feel and act this way?

The Younger Son did not have faith and trust in His Father's love and goodness.

Instead he listened to the voices that questioned his value, and told him to – go out in the world and prove that you are worth something - that you are worth being loved.

We too have heard these other voices throughout our life:

- You need to be better than your friends
- Don't show your weakness, you'll be used.
- When you stop being productive, people lose interest in you.

“There is a true voice of Love. It is a very soft and gentle voice speaking to me in the most hidden places of my being.”

It was placed inside of us at our conception and grew stronger at our Baptism.

It cries out - You are my Beloved.

When You and I we lose faith and trust in the voice that calls us "Beloved", we are pulled into a distant country and follow the voices that call us to prove we are worth being loved. You and I become the Prodigal Son.

Older Son

- Older son stayed at home, but became a lost man.
- On the Exterior - he did all the right and good things. People respected, admired, praised him, and considered him a model son.

- Internally he became resentful, unhappy, and doing things became a burden.
- He had a complaint in his heart that feels it never received what is due.

"Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends."

Older son chooses to stand outside the circle of Love, refusing to enter the light to which he is called. But he cannot be forced to enter.

Father:

The Father is good. He loves both sons'. He runs out to meet both.

The Father's love does not force itself on his Beloved Sons.

- God is trying to find us, more than we are trying to find Him.
- God's boundless love is here for us to accept and embrace.
- God is always ready to give, and forgive.

"My Son, you are with me always, and all I have is yours." God calls me "my son".

In Greek, the word Son means - child - My child.

How does the Father react?

- No words of judgment
- No recrimination or accusation
- No defense of himself the Father
- No comment on either Son's behavior
- Does not compare the two sons.
- Goes out and Seeks, Invites and wants to celebrate. He Embraces!

God is urging you and me to come home, to enter into His light, and to discover that in God all people are uniquely and completely Loved.

"The Parable of the Loving and Merciful Father" is a story of a God who goes searching for me and who doesn't rest until he has found me.

He urges and He pleads.

He begs me to stop clinging to the powers of the world and to let myself be embraced by His arms that will carry me to the place where I will find life and love.

I Need to Keep saying to myself "God is looking for me". He will go anywhere to find me.

God loves me, He wants me home, and He cannot rest unless He has me with Him. He needs me.

Right now in our Life, You and I are the Younger and the Older Sons on a Journey to becoming the Father and Returning Home.

Hopefully like the younger son: we come to our senses and return home:

- We admit we cannot make it on our own.
- We return to the Father and ask for forgiveness.
- As a beloved child, I claim my full dignity and begin preparing myself to become like the Father.

The merciful, loving heart of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is the merciful, loving heart of God our heavenly Father.

Our sin is not the big deal we think it is; the big deal is our return to the merciful love of God. Trust in His mercy, not in your sin.

Let us approach Him and ask that He take away all that is keeping us from the grace of forgiveness and from completing our Journey of becoming the Father and Returning Home.

He is waiting for us - with out stretched arms in a merciful blessing, hoping that we His children will return so He can speak words of love to us, and embrace us in His arms.

His only desire is to bless and love us.

We adore you O Christ, and we praise you,
Because by Your Holy Cross
You have redeemed the world.