

**Youth Spectacular 2019**  
**March 23, 2019**

Who here knows the name of the Parable Jesus told in the Gospel passage? ... The Prodigal Son, that's right! It is a very well-known story from the Bible. But sometimes, with the really popular parts of the Bible, we need to pay extra attention, because we sometimes miss things. We do not spend enough time really letting the Word of God amaze us. So, let's slow down and take a look at this parable again.

The father in the story has two children. One of his children decides that he wants to leave the father's house. It didn't matter to this one how much the father loved him or how much he had received in the father's house. This child wanted out. So, he demanded his inheritance and left home. Wow! Think about that. Think about going home to your father, or mother, or grandma, or whoever cares for you, and imagine telling them, "Give me what I would get in the will when you die." That is a horrible thing to do, right? But this is what the son in the story did. He demanded his inheritance. He told his father that he wanted to treat him like he was dead. It was a very terrible thing to tell his loving father. That son went on to do other terrible things. St. Luke just calls it a "life of dissipation." But it was full of sinful things. All of this started with him taking his inheritance and walking out on his family. So, later, when the prodigal was coming back after wasting everything the father had given him, he was coming back to a very huge apology. Think about how that would feel. How scared you would be, how worried about what the father would tell you.

So, that is very awful. But now, think of how it must have felt for that poor prodigal, when the father came out to meet him. The father didn't yell, the father didn't make fun of him, the father didn't tell him "I told you so," nor did the father make him grovel and beg. No! What did the father do? The father jumped up for joy when he saw his beloved child "still a long way

off” and ran to him. He ran to him! This is amazing. Try to feel how much love that is. All the horrible things that kid did, and all the awful words he spoke against his father, but the father was so overjoyed that he ran to this child that he loved.

So often, my dear friends, we get stuck thinking that the father could never love us. We are not perfect, and we do bad things. Have you done bad things in your life? Do you feel ashamed of those things? Yes, me too. This is what happens when we leave the father’s house. We end up hurting. But all the father wants from us is to come back to him. That’s all, just turn back. The father wants to run to you, my sisters and brothers. He wants to wrap you in his arms and rejoice because you were lost and you are found. He wants to bring you home to the fullness of life. This is who God is. That is amazing.

So many people around us look at others with the wrong eyes and wrong heart. They see people around them like the other child. He could not understand how the father could take the prodigal back. All the other child saw was a person not worth forgiving, not worth loving. But we know better, my friends. We are children of God, and we know that those around us are children of God. Could you imagine if every one of you amazing young people here treated those in your families, in your schools, and among your friends the same way. Imagine how many lives would be changed. People would see true love through you, the love of the Father in the heaven.

So many people are searching for truth, but we forget to teach them the most important truth – God’s love is infinite and offered to everyone. So many people you know are feeling lost, they do not know that they are loved by God. Go show them! Love them the way that God loves us. We are united in Christ because Christ loved us first. Like Pope Francis told the World Youth Day Pilgrims in Panama: “Christianity is Christ. It means

pursuing the dream for which he gave his life: loving with the same love with which he loved us.”

Don't wait my friends. In this Lenten season, return to the Lord. Receive the unbelievable, amazing love of God who runs to us when we are lost and far away from him. Then go share that love with others. May they hear in your forgiveness, patience, care, kindness, and joy, the voice of the father who loves them. “My child was dead and has come back to life again, was lost and has been found.”