

# "The Younger Brother"

by Rev. John C. Tittle

## Scripture Reading: Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-24 NRSV

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable:

<sup>11b</sup> "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup> When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" <sup>20</sup> So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What jumps out at you about this passage?
2. Which character do you relate with most in this parable—the prodigal son, the father, or the elder brother?
3. Have you ever been each of the different characters in the story in your own life? How so for each?
4. Why do you think the younger son decided to fly the coop?
5. What went through the father's mind when his son asked for his inheritance before his father died?
6. Have you ever been jealous of the prodigal son because of his courage to be bad?
7. Have you ever gotten yourself into a financial hole with debt before? What type feelings did/do you experience when the bills are piling up.
8. In addition to wasting his money, the prodigal son was impacted by a natural disaster. Why do you think this part of the story is often missed?
9. What does this story teach us about the importance of our relationship with money?
10. Have you ever reached a moment where, like the prodigal son, you "came to your senses?" What gave you that moment of clarity?
11. Does the father surprise you in this story? Should he have shown more discipline to this younger son who was so irresponsible?
12. How did the prodigal son change through his financial deprivation and experience with hunger?
13. Is there anyone in your life that you need to reunite with? How do you think it would go?
14. How can we become a more prodigal-hugging church?