



The Parable of the Prodigal Son.

Tax collectors and sinners came to Jesus Christ to listen to Him. The proud Pharisees and scribes, teachers of the Jewish people, murmured about Jesus Christ for this and said, "He receives sinners and eats with them."

But Jesus Christ told several parables, which showed that God joyfully and lovingly receives every repentant sinner. Here is one of them.

There was a man who had two sons. The youngest said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me." The father granted the request and divided his property between them. Not many days later, the youngest son gathered all he had and journeyed into a far country; and there, he squandered his property in loose living. When he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. He would gladly have eaten the food that the swine ate, but no one gave him anything.

When he came to himself, he remembered his father, was filled with remorse over his deed, and thought, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants'."

Thus, he did. He got up and went to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and embraced him, and kissed him.

The son said to him, "Father! I have sinned against Heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to make merry.

Now his elder son was in the field, and he came and drew near to the house; he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this meant. The servant said to him, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has received him safe and sound." But the elder son was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him.

But he answered his father, "Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command. Yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living wantonly, you killed the fatted calf for him!"

The father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."

In this parable, the father represents God, and the prodigal son — the repentant sinner. Resembling, the prodigal son is every person who in his soul turns away from God and pursues his self-willed, sinful life. By his sins, he destroys his soul and all the gifts: life, health, strength, capabilities — which were bestowed on him by God. When the sinner coming to himself brings to God sincere repentance with humility and hope in His mercy, then the Lord as a compassionate Father rejoices with His angels over the return of the sinner, forgives him all his sins as if they never have been made, and returns to him all His mercy and gifts.

By the story about the elder son, the Saviour teaches that all faithful Christians must with all their souls desire salvation for everyone and rejoice over the return of the sinner not envying the love that God gives them and not considering themselves more worthy of God's mercy than the one who returns to God from his former immoral life.

Note: See the Gospel of Luke 15:11-32.