

God's OUTRAGEOUS GRACE. You see, the Father is more "prodigal" than the prodigal! **PRODIGAL** means Overly **LAVISH, EXTRAVANT, GENEROUS, OUTRAGEOUS GRACE!** (Gives away the family fortune; then hands the son the keys to the bank again!)

Both boys in this parable are behaviour-oriented. Ask the older boy about sin and he would start talking about *the absence of wrong behaviour*. Ask the younger son about sin, and he speaks of *the absence of right behaviour*. The Father defines sin *relationally* more than *behaviourally*. You see, the bible portrays the 10 commandments as a divine protection of every relationship in this life that matters to a human being.

Sin is the "transgression" or breaking of one of those relation-protecting commandments. God is by nature a relentless lover and an unconditional Lover! God didn't need Calvary to change His mind about us. He needed Calvary to change **our** minds about Him!

Jesus said, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing!*"

When you hear God speaking those words, it is no wonder that the human heart feels like celebrating and singing! Amen.

THE VOICE OF PROPHECY SPEAKS

WHAT BIBLE PROPHECY SAYS ABOUT YOUR FUTURE

#16

Party for Prodigals

The New Testament witness shows us that the kind of church Jesus Christ came to create was one that would throw a party for all kinds of left-out people in society. Jesus associated with sinners and stated to the religious leaders of His day that He preferred the company of the social out-casts.

Daring evangelism for a dying world causes us to take a serious look at three parables in scripture: The Lost Coin, The Lost Sheep and The Prodigal Son. The primary point of all three parables is **not** the "*Lost-ness*" but the **outrageous joy** of the Finders!

-Jesus Parties-

Jesus designed the church "*to be a party*". To show the world a thrilling foretaste of what is coming! In the Old Testament God called the Jews to do the same thing. Every 50th year, the "*Jubilee*" was to be an outrageous party! Debts cancelled, land returned to original owners, prisoners set free.

Some critics feel uncomfortable when God's people celebrate, laugh and sing when they evangelize by sharing the Good News! Jesus had the same problem.

See: Matthew 11:16-19

No matter what you or I do, there will be religious types who will NOT be satisfied. Perpetual faultfinders who pick people apart. Judas-types: who complain about perfume. But Jesus didn't let these people throw a wet blanket on His party.

-Worldly Parties-

The movie Animal House, portrayed college fraternity parties as the best fun any late adolescent could hope to enjoy; an extravagant bash with booze, babes and boogie! These parties are **cruel and dehumanizing, empty and impoverished!**

These parties cannot hold a candle to the joyful celebrations of the people of God when they proclaim the Good News! The words of one famous Christian writers still applies today:

"She selected a certain hymn that fitted her subject. The hymn was announced. The congregation stood and in the warm evening began to sing listlessly. The music dragged monotonously. Then she held up her hand. "Stop!" she ordered. "Stop!" I have heard the angels sing. They do not sing as you are singing tonight. They sing with reverence, with meaning. Their hearts are in their expressions of song. Now, let us try again and see if we can put our hearts into the singing of this song" – The Lonely Years, Vol.3, p.384

In Luke 15:22-24 we see that our heavenly Father rejoices and celebrates when one of His children comes back home!

-Parable Perspectives-

- Lost Coin: How was it found? **Ans**: Someone sweeps & turns the place upside down!
- Lost Sheep: The Shepherd **goes** in search. Evangelism personified.
- The Prodigal: He was sought after by... **no one**. When children leave the faith, to go after them often drives them further away. You don't send a posse. He knows he's lost and he knows the way back. We need to pray without ceasing (leave the light on), and the Holy Spirit does the rest. *See: Luke 15:17- 20* We see in this verse that the son returns for the wrong motive (works) but the Father doesn't care at this point. He **runs** to embrace His son! He welcomes him **before** he confesses. LOVE & ACCEPTANCE. The Father didn't say, "Son, unless you mean it and change, you can pack your bags and leave!"

*The problem with the Elder brother **and** the prodigal son is that they **both** failed to realize that the Father values relationship more than rules. The Father doesn't rush out of His house to restore broken rules but His heart races towards His boys to restore a broken relationship! Of course God has rules (10 commands) for our **true** freedom and well-being. But God's preoccupation isn't with the rules; it's with the relationship. We don't appreciate blessing in being in harmony with the divine rules (a transcript of His character) for living, **until we see and experience***