

There is perhaps no more beautiful story in the Gospels than that of the Prodigal Son. Here Jesus tells us in simple language that we can all understand, about the love God has for you and me. There is not one of us who has not at one time or another felt alone and afraid. There is not one



of us who at one time or another; who has not hurt someone we care for, or have been indifferent to someone who really needed us at particular moment in their lives. There is not one of us who has not experienced

hurt from another. There is not one of us who at one time or another have felt so racked with guilt that fear prevented us from taking the necessary steps to put our lives back together.

In today's Gospel all of these memories and feelings are brought forward so that we can truly appreciate the wonderful message of this parable. When Jesus tells this story, he knows full well that he is speaking of you and me when he speaks of the prodigal son. He knows full well that

because of our human weakness we often live in unnecessary guilt and fear. Pay attention to the thoughts of this young man who left home and really messed up his life. These are the same thoughts of you and I when we wonder how we can make our lives “right” again. We begin to feel that in order to be forgiven by God or others we need to put ourselves down. We think that we should deny our dignity as a child of God for the sake of our pride.

Jesus tells us today that when the young man finally decided to return home, he was greeted in a way that he did not expect; there was his father in the distance with arms outstretched waiting to receive and embrace him. God knows that at times when we have fallen it is hard to pick ourselves up. God knows that at these times we are very vulnerable and often react with fear because we think that we have lost His love or the love of the one we have hurt.

On Jesus’ journey to Calvary he fell three times, yet feeling completely drained of his strength he had to rely on his will to pick himself up and carry on. He knew the journey was a painful one, but he also realized that in the end good would triumph. This young man in today’s parable fell from grace. He left home thinking life would be better elsewhere, and when he discovered that the grass was not greener on the other side of the fence, he was hesitant to return home because of fear. God does not want us to live in fear. Through Jesus he has shown us how much we are loved and how much he understands our human condition. What God wants is for us to know that we are welcome to return home always, regardless of what has happened in our lives.

**Let us pray: Lord Jesus, on the way to Calvary you fell three times, yet you found the strength to pick yourself up and carry on. You knew that in the end your Father would provide. When all my strength is gone and guilt and self-reproach press me to earth and seem to hold me fast, protect me from the sin of Judas—save me from despair! Lord, never let me feel that any sin of mine is greater than your love. No matter what my past has been I can begin anew. Amen.**