

## THE FORGIVING FATHER

### References:

Luke 15:11-32.

### Notes For Servants:

- 1.
- 2.

### Objectives:

General:

Specific:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Instructions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### Bible Verse:

**“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father,  
I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,  
and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.”**  
(Luke 15:18-19)

### Lesson:

## The Forgiving Father

#### ***THE FATHER'S LOVING BOSOM:***

The Lord Jesus told a parable which, illustrates the love of God. It was about a prodigal son, a youth who was deceived by the pleasures of the world. That son thought that happiness lay in freedom from all parental restraints. Therefore he asked his father to give him his share of inheritance so that he might spend it as he wished. Strangely enough, his father complied with his request, and the son left the paternal home.

- + Why is the son's behaviour objectionable?
- + Why do we consider the father's attitude one of great love?

“The younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living”.

*Let us ask ourselves:*

- + What is true freedom?
- + What is real happiness?
- + Does freedom lie in the rejection of all authorities and restraints.
- + Can we find real happiness in worldly pursuits and lustful pleasures?
- + Why is self-sufficiency and the rejection of God's paternal care a great sin?
- + Is there any similarity between Adam's sin in paradise, and the sin of the prodigal son when he rebelled against paternal authority and left home?
- + What are the dangers of spiritual rebellion?
- + Why is obedience to God essential to the Christian life?

How wretched it is for a person to live away from his father's home, and to be deprived of paternal, sacrificial love! He who lives merely for himself is indeed miserable. Is it not Hell to be a slave to one's self, completely separated from God's love? Does not Heaven, or eternal happiness, lie in the enjoyment of sonship to God, with all its glorious blessings?

### ***LIFE IN THE DISTANT COUNTRY:***

That youth thought he could live a self-sufficient life, enjoying all he could possibly wish for. He soon discovered, however, that he could not go on living such a life. His resources ran out, and he was in great need. "So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country who sent him into his fields to feed swine".

- The feeding of swine points to the degraded state of life into which a person descends when he lives away from God. The son who was not used to such degradation could not tolerate it. He remembered the blessings he had enjoyed in his father's home. He said: “How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare but I perish here with hunger!”.
- Can a son forget the blessings of his father's home? Grace knocks at the door of the rebellious heart and calls it to repentance, God seeks to draw his child to Him with bonds of love. Such is the work of the Holy Spirit. He softens the rebellious heart, causing it to confess its sin and repent.
- Where are we spiritually? Are we in the Father's home, living in glorious communion with Him through His word, through prayer, and through the Sacraments? Are we vital members of His body, the Church, richly enjoying the blessings of His Grace? Or have we left His loving bosom, and gone after evil companions, leading a life of false pleasure and rebellion?

### ***A BLESSED RETURN:***

Repentance is not mere regret. Nor is it mere suffering from a guilty conscience. It is a change of heart resulting from a new vision of the Father's love. It is turning away from the life of sin and going to the Father's bosom. It is our response to His love. It is the opening of our hearts to the call of the Spirit that is working in us.

The prodigal Son repented and decided to return to his father. He said, “I will arise and go to my father, 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.” And he actually rose and went to his father.

Meditate on this repentance. Consider also the repentance of Zacchaeus, Levi the tax collector, and Mary Magdalene. Repentance is a renewal of thoughts and inclinations. Have I experienced

this repentance? Have I given my back to the world and returned to Christ who is my way and my life?

If I have not yet had this experience, let me kneel at the feet of the Lord, asking Him to melt my stony heart and to give me the new life experienced by the prodigal son, and by all who repented truly and fully.

### ***THE FATHER'S JOY:***

The Father has been waiting hopefully for the return of his son. (Christ was crucified for our sake. He is lovingly waiting for our return. He will not reject us if we go to Him). The Father saw his son while he was yet at a distance. He “had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.” My heavenly Father, help me to realize the depth of Your love, and grant me the Grace to respond to it. The father did not rebuke his repentant son. He did not scold him, nor did he treat him “as one of his hired servants.” He accepted him joyfully and kissed him.

Then he dressed him in the best robe, killed the fatted calf for him, and put a ring on his finger.  
- What do all these symbols stand for?

### ***THE JEALOUS BROTHER:***

The elder son should have rejoiced with the Father when his brother returned but he did not. On the contrary he was angry and jealous. He said to 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.” By this complain, the elder brother was placing himself in the position of a stranger or of a hired servant, instead of behaving like a loving son and brother.

Self-righteousness is extremely dangerous, and so is false religion. True religion is love. We should rejoice when a sinner repents, and welcome him into the Church, instead of criticizing him and looking down on him, as many people do.

1. Show how the prodigal son did not understand the meaning of true freedom and happiness.
2. What is meant by repentance?
3. What do you think: of the behaviour of the elder brother? Give reasons for your answer.

### **Conclusion:**

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- 2.
- 3.