

SHOW US THE FATHER

LUKE 15:11-32

# GRACE FOR PRODIGALS



**FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH**

DAVID MURRAY  
AUGUST 21, 2022 (AM)

---

# INTRODUCTION

Have you ever met someone and they make it really clear that they are not at all happy to see you? Perhaps it's in a store, in the workplace, or in your neighborhood. You light up when you see them, but they darken. You smile, they frown. You extend your arm (or arms), their arms are strangely paralyzed. You want to stay and chat, they want away as quickly as possible. They are not at all happy to see you. It's a horrible experience, isn't it?

I remember pouring out a lot of time and money to surprise someone on their doorstep, and when they opened the door, they scowled, and said, "What are you doing here?" I explained my desire to give them a pleasant surprise, and their response was, "You shouldn't have come." I wasn't invited in. They were not at all happy to see me. It was a horrible experience.

**How happy is God the Father to see us?** When we turn up on his doorstep, is he happy to see us, or mad that we would even try to meet with him? Perhaps we haven't met with God for a time, or perhaps we've never met with God at all, and we fear turning to him or returning to him, because we think he will reject us. Let's see how happy God the Father is to see us in Luke 15:11-32.

## BACKGROUND

God's Fatherhood brings many desirable blessings into our lives.

- Designer for creatures
- Love for the loveless
- Compassion for the hurting
- Provision for the poor
- Discipline for the disobedient
- Assurance for doubters
- Peace for the anxious
- Grace for Prodigals

The lost son follows parables about the lost sheep and the lost coin.



---

# 1. OUR FATHER WAITS (11-20)

## Our Father waits for need

**And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need** (14).

**I'm fed up** (12): "Dad's a good guy but life here is so boring. That's all going to change today. I'm going to ask Dad for an advance on my inheritance and then I'll be off to a bigger and better life in the city."

**I'm free** (13): "I can't believe it! I'm on the road. Free. At. Last. No more Sunday worship, no more family devotions, no more 'Home by midnight,' no more boredom. Free to choose my friends, free to try whatever I want, free to be me. Freedom! Watch out world, here I come!"

**I'm famished** (13-14): "I'm sure I had more money in that bag. Where did it go? I couldn't have spent it already could I? Where are my friends? I haven't seen anyone since I started having to cut back last week. I'm so hungry. How can I get something to eat?"

**I'm filthy** (15-16): I can't believe this. From the beautiful people to pigs! From parties to a pigsty! I never thought pig-slops could look so tasty. Some friends they were – wouldn't even help me through my little downturn. They make me sick. The pigs make me sick. I make myself sick. What can I do? What a mess!

**I'm foolish** (17): What am I doing? Look at what you've given up. And look at what you "gained." I've been such a fool. Come on, think man. Even Dad's servants have a better life than this. They've got plenty food, and I'm simply starving. Maybe I should....No....I couldn't. I couldn't."

**I'm finished** (18): "OK, I'm done. I can't take any more of this. I'll go home, ask Dad for forgiveness, beg for mercy, and hope he takes me on as a servant." His physical need made him see his spiritual need for the first time.

## Our Father waits with longing

**But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him** (20).

The Father didn't just forget about his son and say, "I'll worry about him when he comes back into my life." No, he looked out for him every day, he kept his eye on the horizon for the smallest speck to appear, and each time it did, his heart leapt that it might be his son. This day was no different until it was completely different.

## CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**We are needy.** The son was spiritually needy when he was in his father's house. He just didn't realize it. He needed to experience physical and social need to recognize his spiritual need. But we don't need to wait for such painful needs to see our spiritual need. Ask God to show you it without leaving his house.

**The Father is waiting.** God is not disinterested in you, off doing his own thing, while you're doing your thing. No, he's looking out for you, he's scanning the horizon for you. He's waiting for you. What are you waiting for?

GOD IS WAITING  
SO YOU DON'T NEED TO



"But what kind of reception will I get?"  
The biggest welcome you could ever imagine.



---

## 2. OUR FATHER WELCOMES (20-24)

**While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him (20).**

"Who's that on the hill? Looks like Dad. Must have lost a sheep. Oh, now he's running...in this direction. I wonder if he saw me?"

"My son, my son, my son. Welcome home, my son, my son."

"Dad, please. Please, Dad! Dad, can you hold off on the kisses? Dad! Dad, please don't call me your son. I don't deserve that. I am so, so sorry; I've sinned against God and I've sinned against you. Listen, I know I don't deserve even this but if I could even be one of your servants, that would be huge.

"Servant? Never, never, never. You're my son. Always and ever my son."

"No Dad. It's not right."

"If you want justice, you've come to the wrong place, my son. You were lost and dead. You are found and alive. You most certainly are and shall be my son.

"Hey, servants! Best cloke, best ring, and best meat. Fix it. Fast. We're going to celebrate, and have such a good time. My son, my son, my son."

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**God welcomes you.** He welcomes you with compassion, speed, love, hugs, kisses, forgiveness, assurance. God welcomes you with everything he's got. He welcomes you without pretense, reservation, qualification, condition, hesitation, or reluctance. He welcomes with grace, mercy, and peace, not anger, distance, and tension. He put out a cross-shaped welcome mat out so no one would have any doubts about knocking on his door.

**God celebrates you.** Once he's welcomed you, he celebrates you. He gives you the best clothes, the best jewelry, the best shoes, the best food, the best party. He has no greater pleasure than welcoming sinners. We used to look forward to Friday night parties. God looks forward to Sunday mornings and evenings.

GOD WELCOMES ALL  
WHO DON'T COME WELL



"But some Christians don't welcome me."  
God's got a warning for them.



---

## 3. OUR FATHER WARNS (25-32)

### The older son was not waiting

It looks like the older son never gave a second thought to his young brother. "Good riddance to bad rubbish" seemed to be his general attitude. He just got on with his sad, self-centered, self-righteous life.

### The older son was not welcoming

Instead of running to welcome his brother and celebrate his return at the homecoming party, he stewed in his anger and kept his distance (28). When his father invited him to rejoice with everyone else (28), the son's reply revealed the true nature of his relationship with his father. It was purely transactional and legal. "Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!" (29-30). In other words, "I did all this good and I didn't do any of that bad. I deserve much more than my brother who did no good and all this bad. I deserve much more than he does, and he deserves much less than I do."

The Father replied, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found' (31-32). The Father admonishes the older son to remember all his privileges, all that was already his. In the context of verses 1-2, Jesus is clearly warning the Pharisees not to be the older son. They had all the religious privileges, but they looked down on others who did not and grumbled about them being welcomed by Jesus.

### CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

**Jesus warns if we're not waiting.** Are you waiting for returning prodigals, backsliders, and other notorious sinners. Do you come to church looking hopefully for new faces and the return of long-forgotten old faces?

**Jesus warns if we're not welcoming.** Do you resent outsiders or welcome them. Do you go out of your way to talk to them or go out of your way to welcome them? Are you showing the heart of God or the heart of the older son? Do you want to join the party or stand outside fuming about who is inside?

WELCOME LIKE GOD  
TO WELCOME TO GOD



## SUMMARY



## A NEW CHAPTER

**Gospel.** The root meaning of 'welcome' is to have pleasure in the arrival of another person. That's who God is. God has pleasure in the arrival of everyone who comes to his doorstep. God is the best greeter, the best welcomer in the world. But we must come via the door of Jesus.

**Welcome.** We have a church welcome team. It's an extremely important part of our church's witness. But all of us must be engaged in communicating the Gospel Welcome to everyone.

**Heaven.** Imagine the welcome when we arrive at heaven's door. No scowlers there!

**Prayer.** Welcoming Father, sorry for making you wait so long, please welcome me and make me a Gospel welcomer.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What have been your good and bad experiences of church welcomes?
2. How did you think of God's welcome before this sermon?
3. What ways did God use to show you your spiritual need?
4. How can you give God reason to celebrate you?
5. How would you encourage someone to come to God the Father?
6. How can you become a better welcomer in church?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church  
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315  
Phone: (616) 878-9768  
[www.firstbyroncrc.org](http://www.firstbyroncrc.org)

Pastor David Murray  
[www.thestorychanger.life](http://www.thestorychanger.life)