

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

HOMECOMING

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

The parable of the two sons (Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32)

Chapter 15 of Luke's Gospel contains three interconnected narratives, concerning the one lost sheep (from a field of one hundred), the one lost coin (from a set of ten), and the one lost son (from a family of two). Each narrative concluded with invitation to celebrate because what was lost has been found. Yet there is an added twist to the narrative of the lost son, because his brother refused to join the celebration.

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's narrative of the two sons is *homecoming*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Luke 15: 20b-24; for reflection throughout the week)

While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion;
he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.
Then 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 slaves,
"Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him;
put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.
And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;
for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!"
And they began to celebrate.

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
when we are lost,
you welcome us back home with you.
Inspire us to follow your example,
and to welcome all who turn to you,
for with you everyone is welcome,
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’

So he told them this parable:

The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother

Then Jesus said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.” So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up 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 like one of your hired hands.’ ” So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then 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 slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.

‘Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.” Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, “Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!” Then the father said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.”’

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32)

Begin to explore Luke's narrative of the two sons by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you make of the father's behaviour throughout the narrative?
- What do you make of the younger son's behaviour?
- What do you make of the older son's behaviour?
- Who does Luke have in mind as the younger and older sons?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore the other two narratives in Luke that precede this one.

- Luke 15: 3-7
- Luke 15: 8-10

Explore the partial overlap with Matthew.

- Matthew 18: 12-14

Explore imagery from the Old Testament.

- Genesis 33: 4
- Genesis 41: 42-43
- Genesis 45: 14-15
- Genesis 46: 29
- Zechariah 3: 3-5

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR C) Sunday 30 March 2025

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Luke's narrative of the two sons by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Prodigal son in classical art
- Commentaries on prodigal son
- Welcome home

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's narrative of the two sons is *homecoming*. Draw on your own experience of feeling lost and the relief of finding your way back home. For example:

- Have you ever felt lost and relieved to find your way back?
- Have you listened to stories of people being welcomed back?
- Are you aware of people not being welcomed back?

What have you learned about homecomings?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Luke's narrative of the two sons or by the image of homecoming.

- Create a collage or paintings inspired by Luke's narrative of the two sons or by the image of homecoming.
- Make a poster on the theme of celebration because what was lost has been found.
- Make a display of welcoming invitations and messages.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of the two sons or on the image of homecoming.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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