

---

## *The Parable of the Prodigal and the Lost*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Sam G. Candler**

*(excerpts from Sam Candler's sermon on 14 March 2010)*

, The parable might have ended with the simple return home of the prodigal son, with an ending that would have suited moralists and Sunday School teachers for centuries. Don't be irrationally exuberant, impatient and impudent. Don't ask for something that isn't yours yet. Don't squander your life in dissolute living. That's a fine lesson!

But the parable does not end there. Suddenly, the word "prodigal" begins to describe, not the younger son, but the father. While the younger son was returning, but still far off, it is the father who becomes irrationally exuberant. He is "filled with compassion," another lovely phrase in this parable. "Filled with compassion," means he was loving from his guts. He was moved, deeply moved. It is the father who is prodigal now, lavishly extravagant, running to his younger son and throwing his arms around him.

, Finally, , there is an elder son in the parable, who becomes angry and refuses to go into the house where music and dancing and all sorts of commotion are occurring. They are calling it celebration. But the older son is devastated. And his accusation against his father is devastating.

"Listen," he says to his father, "for all these years I worked like a slave for you! Like a slave. I followed all the rules and customs and traditions. I was not the impatient one who weaseled an early inheritance out of you. I never disobeyed. I never disobeyed one of your commands. But you, you never even gave me a common goat, much less the fatted calf. You never even offered me one of the common goats that I might celebrate with my friends."

"But when this son of yours comes back. This son of yours""for I am not even sure he is my brother anymore""when he comes back after having over-consumed everything. That money he spent was yours! He spent it on prostitutes! When he comes back, you kill the fatted calf for him. What is this?"

, This parable of the prodigal men, two sons and a father, becomes complete only as Christians grow older, from childhood morality, to adult grace, and then to the complexities of family life and group dynamics. When we are young, we relate to the prodigal younger son. When we are older, catching our first glimpses of unmerited grace, we relate to the prodigal, graceful, father. When we begin to develop families and households, when we begin to lead organizations and deal with group dynamics, we discover the older son who is so prodigal with his anger and resentment. How will we act when grace is given to others, but not to us?

, This parable is , about us at each and every part of our lives. As we learn about money and living. As we learn about repentance and grace. As we learn about anger and resentment. As we risk losing things. And then as we do lose things in life and then find them again.

And the older we get in life, the more things we lose. The father in this parable lost a younger son, lost his property, and then it looks like he may have lost an older son. But he gets them back. And he gets them back with a grace that defies explanation.

Jesus talked a lot about losing things. And, then, even he was lost. But in Christ, lost things are found. In Christ, the dead come to life.

[Click here](#) to read the entire sermon or download a podcast recording.

---

© The Cathedral of St. Philip. All rights reserved.