

Most of us know very well the story of the Prodigal son. We know what each of the protagonists, the father, the younger son and the older son, does and says. It would appear that the most important element of the parable is what the younger son does, his squandering, coming to his senses and ultimate repentance.

However, as with most of the parables that Jesus tells, this one can be applied in different ways. We might consider the father as God Himself or we might put ourselves in the father's place. If we consider God as the father in this parable, we might consider how the father has given us all we asked for and more. We might consider how we have used all the gifts of God. Have we squandered them all or just some of them? Do others benefit from all the gifts we have been given or do we use them only for our own benefit? Are we repentant for not using all the gifts we have as best we can? There are a lot more questions like these.

If we consider ourselves as the father in this parable, do we treat others well, giving what they need or request? Do we welcome with open arms those who do not live up to our expectations or even those who hurt us? Do we do what is right and just even when others think less of us for what we do?

If we consider ourselves as the prodigal son do we have the courage to admit our wrongdoing? Do we recognize that we do not always do what the Father expects of us? Do we have the resolve to return to the father? Do we want to follow our own will, do what we want to do, without any consideration as to what may be the will of the Father for us?

Or might we be the older son who is incensed at the father for celebrating the return of the wayward child. Do we refuse to be with some sibling, relative or any other whom we consider problematic? Do we have children, relatives or others who will not talk to us for whatever reason? What do we do about those situations? Do we just give up and say that it's their problem not mine? Although we may not be able to fix or make better the situation we can put the entire matter in God's hands and PRAY fervently for them, for God's blessings on them and for us to learn, understand and follow the will of God in these difficult situations.

In fact I think that the parables of Jesus are meant for us to consider how we might fit into all the possibilities of interpretation and act accordingly. In this parable the son is prodigal by squandering all he was given. But the father is also prodigal by giving the son all he wanted, knowing all might not turn out well, and still lovingly welcoming the younger son upon his return.

Which character in this parable best fits each of us?