

Interpreting the Parable of the Prodigal Son

The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15,11-32) tells the story of a father, who shows surprising compassion to his two sons. The well-known and beloved parable has encouraged people to believe in a merciful God, yet also called the self-righteous to repentance. In this talk, we will focus on three areas: (1) the parable's context in the Gospel of Luke, (2) the parable's details, which bear a particular impact on its interpretation, and (3) the parable's contribution to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God.

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I. Introduction

II. Luke's Prodigal

A. Disputes

B. Joy

C. Repentance

III. The parable: miscellaneous details

A. The introduction

B. God

C. The father's response

D. Interlude: The details and paradigmatic interpretations

IV. The historical Jesus, the kingdom of God and the parable

A. A kingdom of reversal

B. A kingdom of joy

Suggested Readings:

K. E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant & Through Peasant Eyes*. Combined edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.

Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus. Eds. T. Holmén & S. E. Porter. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2011.

K. Snodgrass, *Stories With Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.