

Weekly Gospel Readings
The 3rd Sunday of the Holy Lent

The Prodigal Son

On this Sunday of the third week of the Great Fast, the Church presents to us [Luke 15:11-32](#) about the prodigal son, which is a parable that illustrates to us true repentance, mercy, and reconciliation. However, to fully grasp its depth, let us reflect on this parable through the lens of the Pauline Epistle, Catholic Epistle, and the Acts of the Apostles, the readings that our beloved Church has fed us with today.

In the Pauline Epistle from [2 Corinthians 6:2-13](#), St. Paul reminds us, “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation,” referencing [Isaiah 49:8](#), where the Lord declares, “In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.” St. Paul emphasizes that through the Cross we have already received salvation. Christ did not just save us from eternal damnation, but He gave us life.

This same theme of salvation and renewal is reflected in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The younger son was given a comfortable life under his father’s care, yet he chose to turn away, believing that freedom lay outside his father’s house. He squandered his inheritance in prodigal living, as seen in [Luke 15:12-13](#):

“‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So, he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.”

The Prodigal Son’s departure was not just physical but spiritual. A complete rejection of the love and provision freely given to him. His downfall was not due to a lack of resources to sustain himself but rather due to his love for earthly pleasure.

In addition to that, the older son’s response at the end of the parable sheds light on why the younger son may have left in the first place. He likely felt restricted under his father’s rule. The older son’s complaint at the end of the parable reveals this mindset:

“So, he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’” ([Luke 15:29-30](#))

Clearly, both sons experienced a deeper spiritual struggle, they saw obedience as servitude rather than love. They believed that the father’s care was limiting rather than freeing, much like how the Corinthians viewed their faith as seen in the Pauline epistle this Sunday. St. Paul addresses this misconception in [2 Corinthians 6:12-13](#), saying:

“You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.”

Just like the Prodigal Son and the Corinthians, we sometimes feel that God’s commands are restrictive. Yet, it is not God who limits us—it is our own misplaced desires and attachments that keep us bound. True freedom is

not found in abandoning God's will but in aligning ourselves with it. When we let go of these false affections, we can truly experience the life Christ has already granted us.

In the Catholic Epistle from the book of James, we are warned about the power of the tongue, which can be used to bless or curse. This ties directly into the Prodigal Son's journey of repentance. Initially, his words were filled with selfishness and entitlement. He demanded his inheritance and sought to satisfy his earthly desires. However, when he reached his lowest point, his heart changed, and he humbly confessed: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you." ([Luke 15:21](#)) His change of heart shows us that true repentance is not just about confession, but requires a transformation of both the heart and mind. Christ reinforces this in [Matthew 12:34](#): "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." So then when we allow our hearts to be transformed, our words and actions naturally follow, leading us back to our Father.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we see Tertullus falsely accuse St. Paul before Felix the governor, attempting to paint him as a leader of a dangerous sect. St. John Chrysostom teaches that those who truly focus on the resurrection will not stir up division. However, just as Tertullus falsely accused St. Paul in [Acts 24:1-23](#), the older son unjustly accuses both his father and his younger brother. His resentment comes not from genuine concern for his brother's return but from self-righteousness and pride. Instead of rejoicing in his brother's spiritual resurrection, he fixates on his own perceived injustice.

Through these readings prior to the Gospel of the Prodigal Son, we see powerful messages:

- Salvation is already given to us but we must choose to accept it ([2 Cor 6:2](#)).
- We are not restricted by God but by our own desires ([2 Cor 6:12](#)).
- Our tongues have power as they reflect the state of our hearts ([Jas 3:1-12, Mt 12:34](#)).
- Self-righteousness can blind us to the beauty of God's mercy ([Acts 24:1-23](#))

May we learn from the Prodigal Son, not in his wandering, but in his return. Let us continuously remember the words of St. Paul: "Behold, now is the day of salvation." ([2 Corinthians 6:2](#)) God is waiting for us with open arms!

Sources:

- Homily 50 on the Acts of the Apostles, St John Chrysostom
- Bible, NKJV