



Part 1: *Two Lousy Sons*

The parables of Jesus are commonly assumed to be simple stories, told in an engaging manner and easily understood by almost everyone. People can still be heard to say, "Give us only the parables, and the Christian religion will be more readily welcomed, more quickly understood, and more easily assimilated."

-- Richard N. Longenecker,
The Challenge of Jesus' Parables

I believe, however, that if the teaching of Jesus is likened to a lake, this famous Parable of the Prodigal Son would be one of the clearest spots where we can see all the way to the bottom.

– Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God*

The reality of God is revealed in the word-pictures of a parable. Jesus and the rabbis of old taught about God by using concrete illustrations that reach the heart through imagination...By putting God and his ways on open display for all to ponder, the parables create a new dimension. God enters the world of humanity with the challenges of religious conviction and corresponding action.

-- Brad Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation*

The story, then, is the story of a loving father who had two boys, one of whom walled himself off from his father's love by doing evil, while the other walled himself off from that same love by doing good...In both cases, the sons were prodigals, for they were estranged from their father, and the love relationship between them and him was broken.

-- Leslie Weatherhead, *In Quest of a Kingdom*

They are (the parables) Jesus' characteristic way of inviting his critics to recognize that in his ministry a new order of things is breaking in.

-- Stephen Barton, *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*

Even in all its beauty this story cannot fully articulate the great truth about how the One who created us loves you and me with passionate joy.

-- Henri Nouwen, *Home Tonight*

What the parables show, and what Jesus' life shows as well, is that separation for mission is costly and demanding because it requires risk and sacrifice. For it requires going to the lost in love, offering forgiveness to those who are penitent, and welcoming them into a people being renewed by God's Son in the power of the Spirit.

-- Stephen C. Barton, *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*

'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'

-- Luke 19:10