

Speaking to the soul

Prodigal son

“My wayward children,” says the LORD: “come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts.” Jeremiah 3:22

Jeremiah went to great lengths to show just how far people had wandered away from God. He used incredibly strong language. He talked about them acting like a prostitute running after many lovers, and pictured them sitting by the road waiting for customers (Jeremiah 3:2). Israel had totally abandoned the one true God and had explored every other god on offer. But, amazingly, God hadn't given up on them. He still reached out his hands of love and offered to welcome them home and heal their wayward hearts.

The lavish generosity of God's forgiveness is a prominent theme throughout the Bible. Although humankind has repeatedly rebelled against him, he has always been ready to offer his welcome to all who will turn to him. The parable of the prodigal son is the most beautiful expression of God's fatherly love (Luke 15:11-32). The son acted in a completely irresponsible way. It was bad enough that he asked for his inheritance before his father's death, but things went from bad to much, much worse. Before too long, the money was gone and he was destitute. He knew that he had no right to ever be considered a son again, but he thought his

generous father might be willing to employ him. Justice demanded that the father should punish his son severely for his appalling behaviour, but love took over. The father welcomed him home with outstretched arms, kisses, a new suit of clothes and a party. That's our God!

It might be tempting when you read the parable of the prodigal son to imagine that it is only talking about someone else, but it isn't. It's talking about you and me. We have all sinned against God but, incredibly, he is willing to throw open his arms, welcome us home and lavish his forgiveness upon us.

QUESTION

What does the parable of the prodigal son mean to you?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for your amazing generosity and your willingness to welcome me back home. Amen

