

Hymns and Readings

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son



Kontakion, Triodion, Sunday of the Prodigal Son - Tone 3

I have recklessly forgotten Thy glory, O Father;
and among sinners I have scattered the riches which Thou gavest me.
And now I cry to Thee as the Prodigal:
“I have sinned before Thee, O merciful Father;
receive me a penitent, //
and make me as one of Thy hired servants!”

The Prokeimenon – *Tone of the week.*

Epistle

§ 135: I Corinthians 6: 12 – 20 (*Sunday of the Prodigal Son*)

The reading from the [first] Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

BRETHREN, all things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful.

All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.
Food is meant for the belly and the belly for food,
but God shall destroy both it and them.

Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord,
and the Lord for the body.

And God hath both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His own power.
Do you not know that your bodies are the members of Christ?

Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them the members of a harlot?
God forbid!

Or, do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her?

For “the two,” saith He, “shall be one flesh.”

But he that unites himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

Flee fornication.

Every sin that a man doeth is committed outside the body,
but he that commiteth fornication sins against his own body.

Or do you not know that your bodies are the temple
of the Holy Spirit Which dwelleth in you, which ye have of God,
and you are not your own?

For you were bought with a price;

therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirit, which are God’s.

The Alleluia – *Tone of the week.*

Gospel

§ 79: Luke 15: 11 – 32 (*Sunday, Seventeenth of Luke, Prodigal Son*)

THE LORD SAID THIS PARABLE: ¹¹ A certain man had two sons:

¹² And the younger of them said to his father, Father,
give me the portion of goods that falls to me. And he divided unto them his living.

¹³ And not many days after the younger son gathered all together,
and took his journey into a far country,
and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

¹⁴ And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land;
and he began to be in want.

¹⁵ And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country;
and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

¹⁶ And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat:

and no man gave unto him.

¹⁷ And when he came to himself, he said,

How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare,
and I perish with hunger!

¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him,

Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

¹⁹ And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

²⁰ And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off,
his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck,
and kissed him.

²¹ And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight,
and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

²² But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him;
and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

²³ And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.

And they began to be merry.

²⁵ Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house,
he heard musick and dancing.

²⁶ And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

²⁷ And he said unto him, Thy brother is come;

and thy father has killed the fatted calf,

because he has received him safe and sound.

²⁸ And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out,
and intreated him.

²⁹ And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee,
neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment:

and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

³⁰ But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots,
thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

³¹ And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

³² It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead,
and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

Sessional Hymn - Tone 1

Make haste to open unto to me Thy fatherly embrace, for as the prodigal I have
wasted my life. In the unfailing wealth of Thy mercy, O Savior, reject not my hear in
its poverty. For with compunction I cry to Thee, O Lord: "Father, I have sinned
against heaven and before Thee.

Hymns for the Sunday of the Prodigal Son – On “Lord, I call ...”

I was entrusted with a sinless and living land, / but I sowed the ground with sin / and reaped with a sickle the ears of slothfulness, / in thick sheaves I garnered my actions, / but winnowed them not on the threshing floor of repentance. / But I beg Thee, my God, the pre-eternal husbandman, / with the wind of Thy loving kindness winnow the chaff of my works, / and grant to my soul the corn of forgiveness; // shut me in the heavenly storehouse and save me.

Brethren, let us learn the meaning of this mystery. / For when the Prodigal Son ran back from sin to his Father’s house, / his loving Father came out to meet him and kissed him. / He restored to the Prodigal the tokens of his proper glory, / and mystically He made glad on high, sacrificing the fatted calf. / Let our lives, then, be worthy of the loving Father who has offered sacrifice, // and of the glorious Victim Who is the Savior of our souls.

Of what great blessings in my wretchedness have I deprived myself! / From what a kingdom in my misery have I fallen! / I have wasted the riches that were given to me, / I have transgressed the commandment: / Alas, unhappy soul! / Thou art henceforth condemned to the eternal fire. / before the end cry out to Christ our God: // Receive me as the Prodigal Son, O God, and have mercy on me.

At Litiya As the prodigal I come to Thee, / merciful Lord. / I have wasted my whole life in a foreign land; / I have scattered the wealth which Thou gavest me, O Father. / Receive me in repentance, O God, // and have mercy on me.

On the Praises O loving Father, I have departed far from Thee, but forsake me not, neither reject me from Thy Kingdom. The evil enemy has stripped me and taken all my wealth; I have wasted like the Prodigal the grace given to my soul. But now I have arisen and returned, and to Thee I cry aloud: Make me as one of Thy hired servants. For my sake on the Cross Thou hast stretched out Thy sinless hands, to snatch me from the evil beast and to clothe me once again in my first raiment, for Thou alone art full of mercy.

Psalm 136 [137]

By the waters of Babylon, / there we sat down and wept, / when we remembered Zion. / **Alleluia!**

On the willows there / we hung up our lyres. / **Alleluia!**

For there our captors / required of us songs, / and our tormentors, mirth, saying, / “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” / **Alleluia!**

How shall we sing the Lord’s song / in a foreign land? / **Alleluia!**

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, / let my right hand wither! / **Alleluia!**

Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, / if I do not remember thee, / if I do not set Jerusalem / above my highest joy! / **Alleluia!**

Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites / the day of Jerusalem, / **Alleluia!**

how they said, "Down with it, down with it! / Down to its foundations!" / **Alleluia!**
 O daughter of Babylon, thou wretched one! / Blessed shall he be who requites thee /
 with what thou hast done to us! / **Alleluia!**

Blessed shall he be who takes thy little ones / and dashes them against the rock! /
Alleluia!

Sermon on the Parable of the Prodigal Son

by Fr Alexander Schmemmann

Here is another of Christ's parables from the gospel of Luke.

There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that falls to me." And he divided his living between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into the fields to feed swine. And he gladly would have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.'" And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to make merry.

Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. And he said to him. "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound." But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, "Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!" And he

said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." (Lk 15: 11-32)

This parable is read in church as believers are beginning to prepare themselves for Great Lent, the time of repentance. And perhaps nowhere else in the gospels is the essence of repentance better revealed. The prodigal son left home and went into "a far country," and it is this "far country," this foreign land which shows us the deepest essence also of our own life, of our own condition. Only if we have understood this can we begin the return to authentic life. The person who has never felt this distance, even once in his life, who has never felt himself to be in a spiritual wasteland, separated, exiled, can never understand the meaning of Christianity.

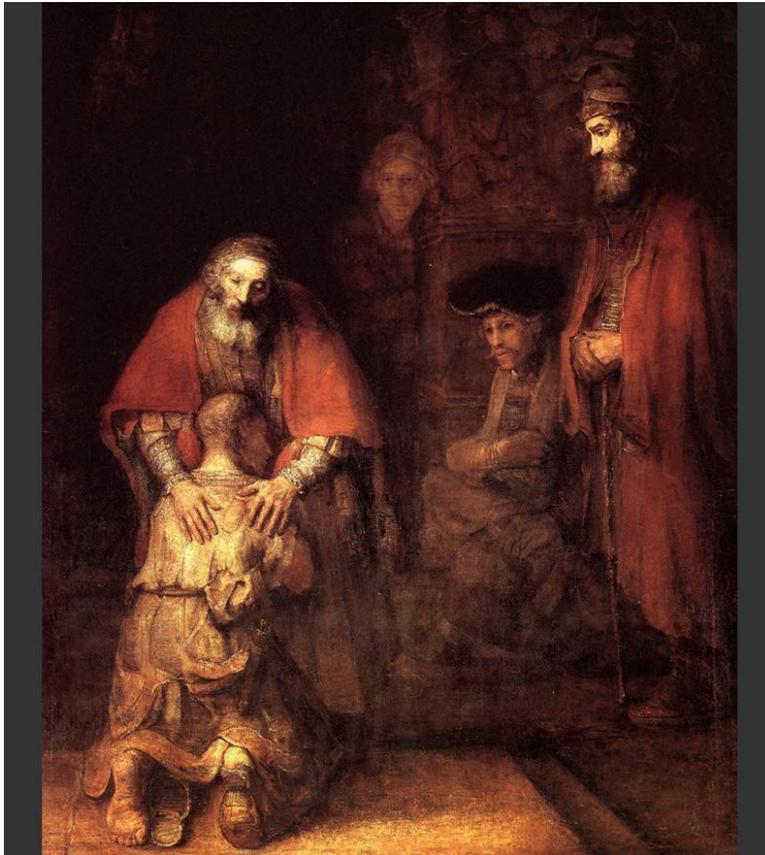
A person who is totally "at home" in this world, who has never experienced longing for a different reality, cannot comprehend remorse and repentance. These are not simply the formal enumeration of one's shortcomings, mistakes and even crimes. No, remorse and repentance are born from an experience of alienation from God and from joy in communion with him. It is relatively easy to admit my mistakes and shortcomings, but how much more difficult it is suddenly to realize that I have broken, betrayed and lost my spiritual beauty, that I am such a long way from my true home, from my true life; that something in the very fabric of my own life, something priceless, pure and beautiful has been destroyed and torn apart. But this realization is precisely repentance, and therefore necessarily involves a deep desire to go back, to return, once again to find the lost home.

All at once I begin to perceive that my heavenly Father has given me a treasure-chest of priceless gifts: first, life itself and the possibility of genuinely enjoying it, which means that I can transform it into meaning, love, knowledge. And secondly, He has given me a new life through his Son Jesus Christ; He has shown me his eternal Kingdom, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit. I was given the knowledge of God and in this knowledge I was given power to become a free and loving child of God. I lost all of this, I repudiated all of this, not only through particular "sins" and "transgressions," but through the sin of sins: by going away into a "far country," by choosing a foreign land, separation, withdrawal ...

But the prodigal son remembered. He remembered the Father, the Father's house, and the lost joy of life. He arose and returned, and the Father accepted and forgave him. During these preparatory Sundays before Lent we sing in church the verses of Psalm 137: "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion ..." We sing this song of exile and alienation, but also of repentance, love and return. If we would only break through the pettiness of life to the memory of heart and soul which recognizes that this is not our real life, that this is not how we really

live. Through a mysterious and hidden memory, heart and soul know and remember the lost home of the Father and the lost joy of life.

“I will arise and go ...” How simple and how difficult. But it is upon these words alone that everything else depends, both in my own life and in the life of the world around me. Everything depends on authentic repentance, on this illumination of mind, heart and soul recognizing at once both the darkness, bitterness and sorrow of our fallen life, and the light of divine love, waiting to fill that life at any moment.



The Prodigal Son - Rembrandt

Sermon on the PRODIGAL SON

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, 3 February 1991

In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

How simple and how restrained are the words in which the Gospel describes his cruel rejection of his father, and prepares his departure into the far, the strange country! “Father – give me my part of thy inheritance!” Do these words not mean: “Father – I can’t wait until your death! You are still strong, and I am young; it is now that I want to reap the fruits of thy life, of thy labours; later they will be stale. Let us come to an agreement: for me you are dead; give me what belongs to me or what would belong to me after your actual death, and I will go, and I will live the life I have

chosen”.

This is what really the young man meant; but isn't it very much the way we treat God and His gifts. From Him, as long as we are with Him, we are in possession of all things, but we feel constrained by His presence, we feel limited by the inevitable rules of His household: He expects from us integrity and truth? He expects from us to learn from Him what it means to love with all one's mind, all one's heart, all one's strength, all one's being, – and that is too much for us. And we take all His gifts, and we turn away from Him to use these gifts so that they can profit us, and us alone, without any returns either to God, or to anyone else.

We all, without any exception but in different degrees obey the cruel, deceitful question of satan to Christ in the wilderness! You have the power to do it – make these stones to become bread; You are God's child – use what God has given you of wisdom, of strength, use it for you own benefit! Why waste your time until you are too old? ... Isn't it an image of our own behaviour?

And then, the young man leaves; he leaves for an alien country, a country which is not God's own, a country which has rejected God, renounced God, which has been betrayed into the power of His adversary, a country where there is no place for Him. And he lives according to the rules of this country and to the desires of his heart. And then, hunger comes.

Now, we turn away, carrying with us the gifts of God; and we live in a country which is also alien; we live in a world which is man-made, but not God-made; or rather: made by God, and distorted by man. What kind of hunger comes to us? We are rich, we are safe, we have everything which God gave us, and continues to give – only we don't realise that God continues to give while we squander. But what is the hunger that can come to us? The awareness which Christ describes in the first Beatitude: Blessed are the poor in spirit, their's is the Kingdom of God ... Who are the poor of spirit? The poor of spirit are those who have understood, and understand day in, day out, all their life through that they have no existence except that God loved us into existence; we have no life except God's life poured into us, His breath, the breath of life. And then we are so rich, because God has revealed Himself to



us: He has revealed Who He is; we can love Him, know Him, worship Him, serve Him, emulate Him indeed because He has become man and has shown us what a man can be. And He has given us all that our intelligence, a heart, a will, a body, the world around us, the people around us, the relationships that are ours – all these are God's, because we cannot make them, we can force no one to love us, and yet, we have friends and people who love us. We cannot be sure of our mind: in one moment a stroke can extinguish the greatest mind; there are moments when we want to respond to a need, to a suffering – and our heart is of stone; only God can give it life! We waver between good and evil – only God can steady our will; and so forth.

If we only realise this, then we understand that we are totally destitute: we are nothing, we have nothing, and yet, so rich we are; because destitute, we are endowed with all the gifts of God; having betrayed Him time and again, turned away from Him time and again, we still are loved of Him: indeed – “blessed are the hungry: they shall be filled”! If we only realise our hunger for the real things, then it will come our way. But not simply because we are hungry; they will come our way at a moment when totally poor, we are loved: and this is the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of love: God loves us. And He has granted the gift of love to each of us. The young man felt hungry. He felt hungry for his father's home, and yet he knew that he had no right anymore to call himself a son to him: he was a murderer! He had told him: Die before your time that I may live according to my will ... And yet he goes, because he still can call the man whom he rejected 'Father'.

And what happens then? The father sees him coming from afar off; he does not wait in dignity for him to fall at his feet and confess his sins. He rushes towards him, he embraces him! And the young man makes his confession: I am no longer worthy to be called thy son - but at that moment the father stops him: you may not be worthy of being my son, and yet, you are my son, and you can not become a hireling in you father's house ... He claims from his, as God claims from us that we should be aware, and grow to the level of our human greatness: the children of the Living God called to be partakers of the divine nature, His sons and daughters in Christ and in the Spirit.

That is what this parable tells us; that is what we must reflect on: where do we stand to this first simple, cruel, murderous words of the young man? And are we aware of our dereliction? Are we hungry enough to realise that we must go home to the Only One who loves us, and Who, seeing us fallen, still claims from us the greatness of sonship ...

Let us reflect on this. It's one more step towards the day when in repentance we will come to make our confession, receive forgiveness. And if we were honest in our repentance, determined in our turning Godwards, we will be at home and ready to enter into Holy week together with Christ the Son, together with the Father Who gives His Son, together with the Mother of God Who accepts the death upon the cross of

Her Son, that we may be saved. Amen.

http://www.mitras.ru/eng/eng_28.htm

WE ARE THE PRODIGAL SON, WE ARE THE OLDER BROTHER

**A Homily on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son
Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Surozh**

As often happens, we destroy the deep, full importance and meaning of relationships, because we are used to a loving person giving to us – giving generously, giving constantly, never thinking of himself: just giving; and how easily we gradually forget the one who gives, remembering just the gifts. It happened with the Prodigal Son, but it so happens constantly in our human relationships...

The Prodigal Son said to his father: “Give me what will be mine when you die;” in other words: “Let’s agree that you no longer exist for me; I only need what you can give me...” And as the Prodigal Son, we then for a while live off these gifts; our heart is yet warmed with the warmth given to us, our mind yet lives on the riches of our bygone association... As long as we are able to live on these gifts, we are surrounded by people who want to live off of that which we received: we are, like the Prodigal Son, surrounded by the people that swarmed around him while he was yet rich from the riches of his father. But when nothing of the riches remained, they fell away. And impoverishment entered his life again: he renounced one human relationship, and now he himself is renounced by others; he remained alone...

Life is possible only in relation to God, and in relation to others people, as if in an ongoing mutual exchange, when we are as much givers as receivers of the generosity of men and God.

And then the time comes for us to deeply and closely reflect upon ourselves, and understand that we have sinned against Heaven, sinned against our father, against our brother, against our loved ones, against our sister – against everyone around us. We have sinned – meaning we severed the tie, desiring to be free of them... And then the time comes to return: back home, there to where they fed us, gave generously to us, cared for us, and in the end, to God, the Font of all blessings.

But so often, trying to return, we meet not the father of the wayward son, but the older brother, who never had a real relationship of love or friendship, neither with us nor with our father. We meet him who can boast that he was always diligently, honestly “working” in his father’s home, doing everything necessary – but indifferently – he fulfilled his duties as those who cannot escape, or as a transaction, as work for money. We must reflect on this, because in our experience of human relations we are not always just the Prodigal Son – we so often are the older brother. Another comes to us and says, “It was my fault that I fell out of contact with you, I

behaved as a parasite, I want to be different!” and we meet them with the words (or gesture), “There was a time when I saw you differently! There was a time when we lived in fellowship, which was precious to me, but you broke it! My wounds have healed, I don’t want to open more!” How often are we the older brother?

And we behave so unlike the father, who never stopped loving his wayward son, even when this lost one renounced him, rejected him, waiting for the time “when he would die,” to take control of everything he had accumulated through years of labor, wisdom, and sacrificial love...

But the father runs forward to meet his lost son. Have we ever acted this way? ... Would we be ready to give him our best clothes, that is, to envelop him with our former relationship? Would we be ready, when he squandered our treasure, disparaged us, and robbed us, to entrust him with our ring, giving him power over our identity, our property, and our honor?

All of these elements of this tragic and wondrous parable are interweaved within every one of us. But it is not enough to discover this; having discovered who we are, we must do something; we must make a decision, we must denounce that identity which we had until now, return, and beseech forgiveness and mercy. It is easy to ask forgiveness from God, because God visibly and palpably never sends us away from Himself empty; He never says to us, “Depart from Me!” But to ask forgiveness from those whom we abused, and who offended us...

Translated by Jesse Dominick
<https://pravoslavie.ru/101030.html>

