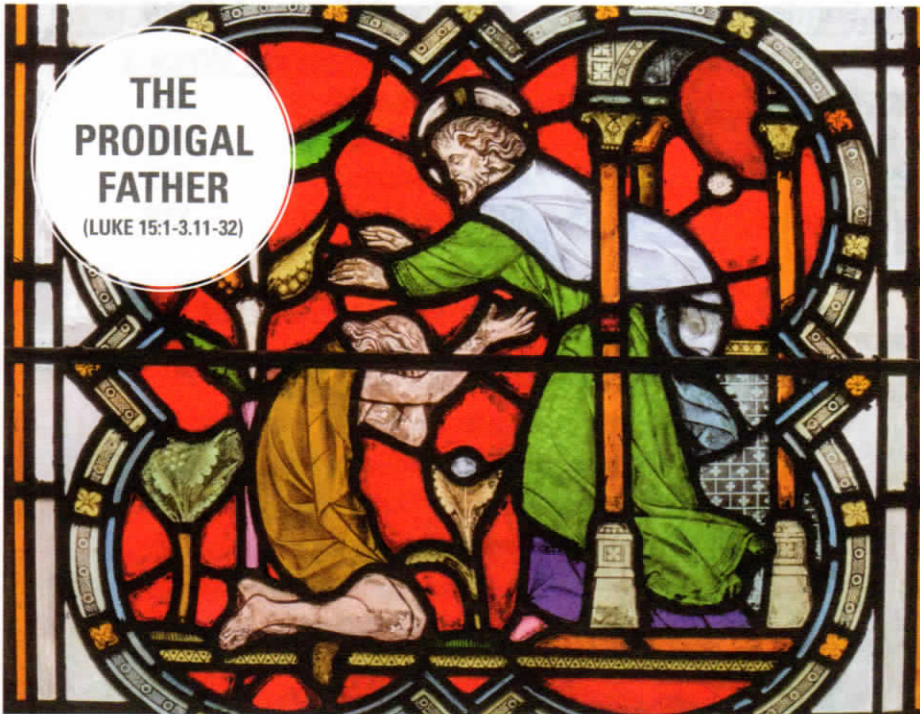


THE PRODIGAL FATHER

(LUKE 15:1-3.11-32)



A depiction of the parable of the prodigal son in the Church of St Michael Cornhill, by Clayton and Bell, 19th century

Jesus conveys his message by what he does just as much as by what he says. When he eats with people on the margins of social and religious society, he is revealing what God is like.

This is a parable in action, and the story of the lost son is a masterpiece of insight and writing, which explains the meaning of Jesus' sharing table-fellowship.

Luke invites us to consider the reactions to the return of the reckless young man who has *come to his senses* as the result of bitter experience. On the one hand we have the father (God) who is overjoyed at regaining his lost child. On the other, there is the embittered elder brother (the Pharisees and scribes) whose life of dutiful service he describes in terms of *slavery*. The first part of the story shows the positive response of outcasts to the prophet: they do not come simply to eat with him but *to listen to him*, and they accept his message. But the religious people cannot accept that God is like this, because it does not fit in with the way in which they understand God and God's attitude to human beings. Like the elder brother, they prefer to stay outside, wrapped in self-righteous indignation. ■

REFLECT

If the parable of the Lost (or *Prodigal*) Son were simply a record of what Jesus said to the people of his day, we could regard it simply as an interesting and edifying account of Jesus criticising the attitude of the Jewish religious leaders of that time. Unfortunately, perhaps, that is not the case. We are being put on the spot: we are being asked to take the side of either the father or the elder brother. How do we feel about people who want to rejoin our community after a period away? Are we pleased, even joyful? Or

do we feel that it's all too easy, that there should be some sort of penalty?

In the end, the question is perhaps more about our own idea of God. Do we believe in God as a loving merciful parent who loves all their children equally? Or is our God one whom we serve out of a sense of duty with little if any personal relationship involved? The elder brother represents those people who keep the rules but feel unrewarded, unappreciated and end up full of anger and resentment, deep down at God, but this comes out in hostility towards other people. Instead of

SAY

Jesus eats with sinners.

DO

Look at the money in your pocket. Would you be prepared to spend it all – and more – on a meal to celebrate the return of someone who had made a complete mess of their life? Or would your attitude be one of righteous satisfaction, *That'll teach him or her!*? Which attitude is Jesus encouraging us to adopt, if we are to be truly his disciples?



LEARN

The word *prodigal* means *wasteful*.

The parable might be better entitled *The Prodigal Father*.

The parables are the prophetic word of Jesus.

They are addressed to us today, personally: each of us is challenged to respond.

developing a proper relationship with his father, the older son dwells on his own unsatisfying situation in life: perhaps, deep down, he is jealous of his brother's escaping from the family home and breaking all the rules.

Our reaction to the characters tells us something about ourselves. But we have a choice: the elder son is free to join the party; the scribes and Pharisees can decide to accept Jesus' invitation. It is our decision. What sort of God do you believe in? ■

PARISH OF DROMORE

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Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday)

Sunday Mass Times

St Colman's, Dromore All Saints, Ballela
Sunday 11.00am Sunday 9.45am

Weekday Mass Times: St Colman's

Mon, Wed & Thurs - 9.30am: Liturgy of the Word with Eucharist

Mass - Tues & Fri : 9.30am

Stations of the cross after mass on Friday morning.

Sat: 10-11am: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Weekday Mass times: All Saints

Thursday - 7.00pm

Ballela Anniversaries

Sun 31: None

Sun 7: None

Dromore Anniversaries

Sun 31: Mary Mulgrew

Sun 7: Anne Prentice

Oratory Promise Collection £817.58

Readers - Dromore

Sun 7: Siobhan McArdle

Recently Deceased

Philomena Walker, Meganlis Park, Dromore.

Collectors: All Saints - April

Noel Burns & Anne McEvoy

Holy Week (14th-20th April)

We begin Holy Week with Palm Sunday and the blessing of palms at each mass. We invite the children making their First Holy Communion to be part of the entrance procession with the blessed palms. Our ceremonies during Holy Week will take place as follows:

Holy Thursday: Mass of the Lord's Supper at 6.00 pm in St Colman's, Dromore

Good Friday: Commemoration of the Lord's Passion at 3.00 pm in St Colman's, Dromore.

Stations of the Cross at 3.00 pm in Ballela and at 7.00 pm in St Colman's, Dromore

Holy Saturday: Vigil of the Lord's Resurrection at 9.00 pm in St Colman's, Dromore

Easter Sunday: masses at the usual Sunday times.

Sunday 31st March 2019

Parish Draw Winners Week 1

£100	Pamela Newell	223
£50	Eamon Rooney	378
£30	Gareth Marks	173
£20	Brendan McCann	118

Ballela G.A.C Lotto

Sun 17th March: 2 9 14 24

No £10 winners, Seller: Sean Burns

Sun 24th March: 6 12 13 23

£10 winner Damien McEvoy, Seller: Anglers Rest.

Next week's draw will take place in Doyle's bar.

Ballela Community Group

Annual "Spring Clean-up" will take place on Sat 6th April, meet at Ballela school at 10.30am and you will be provided with litter pickers and bags.

Meeting Mon 8th April at 7.30pm

The Ballela 2 do Peru

Helen Doyle & Roisin McPolin would like to thank everyone for their support for the "Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust", between raffle & donations and everyone visiting Doyle's Bar we have raised £1200.00. Thank you Helen & Roisin

Dromore Diocesan Historical Society

Monday 8th April at 7.30pm in St Peter's hall, Lurgan. A talk and discussion on George William Russell, his life and its impact led by Jim Conway and Brian McKernan of 'Lurgan & North Armagh George Russell Festival Society'. He was an Irish writer, editor, critic, poet, painter and nationalist born in Lurgan on April 10th 1867. Everyone welcome.

Sick Visits

The sick of the parish will be attended as follows:
Thurs 4th April - Dromore, **Fri 5th April** - Ballela

Annaclone, Ballela & Dromore Lourdes Committee

Meeting will take place on **Mon 1st April** in Ballela school at 8.30pm.

Happy Mother's Day