

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

ONLINE NOTICE BOARD - 41

The parable of the Prodigal Son is a striking lesson in how *not* to pray! That may not be obvious at first reading but it is a lesson undoubtedly taught by this parable. What we must understand is that the father figure in this parable is of course God himself, our heavenly Father. When that is understood the many layers of meaning in this parable begin to reveal themselves. And as with all the parables of Jesus the meaning is much deeper than the simplicity of the story may at first suggest.

The fact is that the prodigal son was lost in poverty the very moment he asks for his inheritance. He gets what he asks for. But he ought never to have asked for what he got. It is not that it was wrong for him to expect an inheritance. We are encouraged to look forward to our inheritance in Christ. What was wrong was his motive and timing. Instead of waiting patiently the proper time when his inheritance would rightly become his, he impatiently and selfishly demanded it there and then – give it me *now*.

Impatience and greed are two grave sins and this young man was guilty of both. The two key words of his request, '*give me*', are fatal words when motivated by self and self-interest. His wealth, instead of bringing him the pleasure he anticipated, eventually brought him down to abject poverty, materially and spiritually. He got what he asked for but he asked amiss. This was also true of the children of Israel in the wilderness. They too got what they asked for but with it they found famine in their souls.

His impatience may be an even darker sin than his greed. For in asking his father for his inheritance 'now' the prodigal is in reality telling his father that he wished he was dead. His impatience tells us that he thought more of his money-inheritance than he did of his father. We are warned that 'the love of money is the root of all evil'. And this young man loved money. We are also told that we cannot serve God and money. And this young man had chosen to serve money. Selfishness, self-interest and greed are the reasons God's will is not done on earth.

It wasn't until he divested himself of all self-gain that he was ready to enter into the joy of his father's limitless riches: '*Father ... make me like one of your hired servants*'. We are told that '*he came to himself*'. His coming to himself was the moment of his self-emptying, the moment in which he crucified greed and self-interest. It was in that moment of utter emptiness that he became ready to receive the father's fullness – even though at that moment he did not realise this for himself.

We come to ourselves when we lose ourselves in the will of God – wanting only what the Father wants for us; patient to wait his time; happy to submit to his will. It was now the prodigal was ready for all the Father longed to lavish on him, lasting riches beyond his wildest expectation!