

Usually when we talk about the story of the prodigal son, I tend to focus on the younger brother who took his inheritance and wasted it. I often talk about how we are that younger brother who wasted our money enjoying life and not worrying about anything outside of ourselves. And then eventually, we find our way back to God who welcomes us back with open arms.

But there was another son in the story. The older son stayed with his father and worked the fields. He did everything that was asked of him while his brother was living it up. Now you would think that this son would be recognized as the obedient son but I found one reference to him as the pouting prodigal. The more I thought about the pouting prodigal, the more I agreed with what the author was saying.

When his brother returned, this brother had a fit and started to pout. We can also represent the pouting son.

The pouting older son represents those who are long time Christians. They didn't run off to enjoy life but instead were very active in the ministry of God's church. The older brother represents those who have their names engraved in the pews and others automatically know that a particular pew belongs to them. But, when it comes to really celebrating what God is doing in the lives of those around them, they don't rejoice because they are too critical.

When we look at the two sons, we tend to lose focus on what this parable is about. If we are like the younger son, we are out to enjoy life and don't really care about what is going on with others. If we are like the older son, we stay busy and expect to be rewarded because of our work. We feel like we should be rewarded to staying and doing the father's will.

But each son is selfish in their own way and even disrespected their father through their words and actions. If the parable ended with the sons, there would not be a lot for us to think about because each son thought that they were entitled to different things from their father. But we do have the actions of the father to look at which is where we get our hope.

When the younger son returned home, the father had to celebrate. He said, "But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." The father was excited that his son was still alive and he wanted to celebrate. The party isn't about the younger son who wasted his inheritance, it is about

the father who was overjoyed that his son had returned. The party was for the father. He wanted to celebrate.

There are many times where we think everything revolves around us. We think that the world's focus is concerned about what we say and do. The younger son felt that way when he demanded his inheritance. The older son felt that way when his father threw a party when his brother returned home. But in the grand scheme of things, we all are lost because of our wandering or because we overvalue what we do.

Now, how does the story end? We're left hanging. We know that the younger son finally returned home to his father. Does the older brother stomp off into the fields and continue to nurse his bitterness? Or does he uncross his arms and allow his dad to put his arms around his shoulders and they walk into the house together and celebrate the lost son's return? I think Jesus left it open-ended on purpose. We are the pouting prodigal. What will you do? The door is open and the Father says, check your bitter, complaining spirit at the door and come on in and enjoy the party.