

Eight Essential Bible Stories
Living the Message 2024-2025
February 2025 Study Guide
Mount Olivet Lutheran Church

February: Luke 15 – *God does not wait for us to be ready* with Pastor Lose

[Click here to watch the video.](https://vimeo.com/1053158523) Or <https://vimeo.com/1053158523>

Opening Prayer

Dear God, bless each one who comes to this study. Open our ears, hearts, and minds so that we may experience your presence in our lives more deeply as we learn about your commitment to stay with us through all things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Focus Statement

There are a few passages in the Bible that are so well known, so beloved, so enshrined in our imagination through art and music that we absolutely know just what they mean. Except when we don't!

Jesus' parable of "the prodigal son" is one of those stories. Of course we know what this story means: God is always willing to receive the repentant, always willing to wait for the sinner to turn around and seek forgiveness. We know and love this story in part because it reinforces a common theological pattern we have internalized so deeply we don't even recognize it: we sin, we suffer the consequences of that sin, we "come to our senses" (to echo the words of the parable) and repent, and then God receives and forgives us. Wash, rinse, repeat.

The God of our imagination is just, setting clear and orderly expectations, but ultimately also patient and forgiving, eager to receive us back in mercy once we've repented. But in this familiar parable, Jesus offers a different picture of God, portraying God not as stern but as somewhat indulgent, not as orderly but as somewhat desperate, and not simply as patient but as downright impatient to receive and restore us, whether or not we've truly repented.

It's that last part that's hardest to imagine. Isn't repentance essential? I mean, if we don't repent and are still forgiven, don't we risk mocking God's justice? And what about those of us who take our faith more seriously, who do repent when we've erred, and who try to honor God's expectations. Good questions! (And some of them are actually asked by characters in the story.) As you read this parable, slow down, pay attention to the details, and ask yourself what stands out to you. It's a story worth savoring!

Scripture: The Parable of the Prodigal Son – [Luke 15:11-32](#)

Questions

1. What was one of your initial takeaways from Pastor Lose's presentation?
2. Why do you think pastor led with [Luke 4:16-30](#). What stood out to you in that scripture?

3. Discuss/think about how Pastor Lose defined parables (what they are and are not) and the various other descriptions he offered. Which one struck a chord with you the most?
 - a. What it is NOT: "A parable is a succinct, didactic story, in prose or verse, that illustrates one or more instructive lessons or principles." (Wikipedia) NO!
 - b. Disruptive: "Parables are narrative timebombs." (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*)
 - c. Riddle: "A parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from everyday life, the meaning of which is sufficiently in doubt to tease the mind into active thought." (C.H. Dodd)
 - d. The Truth Told Slant:

*Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
 Success in Circuit lies
 Too bright for our infirm Delight
 The Truth's superb surprise
 As Lightning to the Children eased
 With explanation kind
 The Truth must dazzle gradually
 Or every man be blind ~ Emily Dickenson*
4. The first few chapters in Luke 15 set the scene for Jesus to tell his two short parables (The Lost Sheep and The Lost Coin) and then the longest parable, The Prodigal Son. What did you notice about that set up?
5. As Pastor Lose broke up this parable, was there something new that stuck out to you?
6. How does the idea resonate with you that the Prodigal Son was not sincere and honest in his repentance (when we hear his internal dialogue), rather he was scheming up his next con?
7. Discuss/think about how the older brother reacts to the return of the lost son? Can you relate?
8. This parable offers us a choice: God as a just judge and king, or God as a loving, even indulgent, parent. What do you think?

Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for waiting for us, looking for us, running to us and always embracing us with forgiveness. In Jesus name, Amen.

Next Month

Jonah 4 – God's love is bigger than we think.

In-person: Tuesday, March 4, 6:30-7:30pm, **West Campus Rehearsal Hall**

Video will be emailed out Monday, March 3

Questions?

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