



The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-31)

Theme: God's unconditional love and forgiveness for the repentant sinner

Memory Verse: "My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:24)

1. Context of the Parable within the Lenten readings

- Run through the seven Gospel readings of Lent below and explain where the parable of the lost son fits in. One idea is to cut out seven cardboard pieces with one reading on each and the children have to stick them on the board in order.

Week	Reading	Gospel
1	Mat 6:19-33	Do not lay up treasures on earth
2	Mat 4:1-11	Temptation on the mount
3	Luke 15:11-32	Prodigal Son
4	John 4:1-42	Samaritan woman
5	John 5:1-18	Healing of the Paralytic
6	John 9:1-41	Healing of the man born blind
7	Mat 21:1-17	Palm Sunday

2. Reading and visualising the parable of the Prodigal Son

- Start by reading the complete parable with the class (Luke 15:11-31)
- After reading the parable – ask one of the kids to explain the parable in their own words
- You can then show this short video for the children to better visualise the story:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkOi85Ck5Bc&feature=related>

3. Introduction

- One of the most magnificent parables illustrating God's unconditional love and forgiveness for the repentant sinner
- Only the gospel of Luke recounts the parable of the Prodigal son

4. The Father: unconditional love and forgiveness

- The father fulfils the request of the son out of profound respect for his freedom, and he lets him go for the same reason (God neither holds or pulls anyone by force)
- The father's tender actions show he never ceased looking for the return of his son, just as God always longs for the return of every sinner to His forgiving embrace.
- In Jewish culture, it is considered undignified for an older man to run, but that did not stop this father.
- When the son decides to return, the father did not rebuke the son, rather he celebrates his homecoming as of one who came alive from the dead.
- The father places the robe, ring and sandals on the son symbolising:
 - i. Robe → Righteousness (Is 61:10)
 - ii. Ring (Signet Ring) → Family identity (Hag 2:23)
 - iii. Sandals → Walking according to the gospel (Eph 6:15)



- The father also has to deal with the resentful older son and does so in the same gentle kindness shown to the younger.

5. The Prodigal Son: Confession and Repentance

- The prodigal son leaves his father's house as an arrogant person, who demanded his inheritance (Luke 15:11), and he returns home a humble person only wanting to be a servant in his father's house (Luke 15:19).
- The son consented to feed swine, unclean and despised animals to Jews, is an act of utter desperation.
- Extreme need brings the prodigal son to his senses, but what draws him home is probably his father's love.
- The prodigal son "comes to himself" (Luke 15:17) and realizes his sins and wrong ways. As a result, he repents and returns home to his father after having lived an immoral life.

6. The Elder Son: Sins of the Tongue

- The elder son criticizes his younger brother to his father, and he is jealous of him. We see here the importance of the sins of the tongue, and the sins of jealousy and hypocrisy.
- You can also read the Catholic Epistle reading for the third Sunday of Lent in James 3:1-12, which talks about the sins of the tongue.
- This son shows a pharisaic attitude of self-righteousness and contempt for his brother, much like a Church member who does not wish to be bothered with visitors or new converts.

7. Conclusion

- We are the Lost Son and the Father is God
- We must emphasise to the kids that God is waiting for our return and will always accept us no matter what.
- If you ever feel too sinful that you cannot return to God, then know that it is the voice of Satan
- Repentance is to "come to yourself" and decide on change in your life (Prodigal son decided he can no longer live this life away from his father's house)
- Confession is returning to God through admitting your sins to God in the presence of the priest (The prodigal son returned to his father and confessed)

8. Conclusion Activity

- Take a \$50 note and ask the kids to put up their hands if they want it. Then throw it on the ground and ask them to keep their hands up if they still want it. Then step on it and crunch it up and ask them to keep their hands up if they still want it (They should all still have their hands up).



- Then you can explain that although it got dirty and trampled on it's still the same value. It is the same for us, even though we are stained with sin, we still have the same value in the eyes of God.