

REFLECTION | *The Prodigal: Who You're Not*

In Luke 15, Jesus tells the story of a rich family in a state of disintegration. The youngest son, who for reasons we're not given, decided home was not where the heart was anymore, and demanded his share of the family's inheritance, then took off for a distant land. Breaking the father's heart, and leaving his brother to carry double the weight at home. He ends up squandering every last penny, and soon finds himself lonely and alone, so poor he wants to eat out of a pig's trough – and longing to return to his family. He gets it in his mind that perhaps if he pleads and grovels and begs, promising **to do** and **be** better this time, he *might* be allowed to come back home – not as a son, of course, but as a hired hand. However. Verse 21 says:

“When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him.”

The son tries to launch into a speech of how much he'd done wrong, how big of a mess, how unworthy he was, offering to trade in his sonship for a job to earn his keep... but the Father would have none of it. Cuts him off mid-sentence, essentially saying you're **my child**. Always have been. Always will be. Now come and step back into who you are.

Many if not all of us have a mixed-up narrative we tell ourselves about who we are, how we don't measure up, don't belong, how we aren't enough. And we carry that weight around like baggage. But that's not how God sees us, that's not the truth of who you are.

So we're going to pause right now, and try to do our best to set some of that baggage down. Together.

To help with that – I want you to hold your hands open on your lap right now – and maybe hold them like you would if you were carrying something. Often we encourage you to close your eyes in these kind of practices, but this time instead I want you to keep them open, and just focus on your hands. And we're going to think about what we're carrying.

So, for you... what are the stories you tell yourself... that somehow make you feel less-than? Whether they're words you've heard, mistakes you've made, specific experiences you've had, or just thoughts that sit inside of you.

We're going to give an open minute or two, for you to just have that conversation with yourself. And as specific things come to your mind, imagine each one of them landing there in your hand like a rock. Let's give that a try.

In the story, when that banged up son came home carrying all that inner baggage – the Father had only one reaction – enthusiastic love and a leaping to restore his child's identity.

That's the heart of God for you, because that's the truth of who you are. Those things you're holding in your hands right now – you don't have to carry. God isn't asking you to carry them. We here in this community don't want you to carry them. You are not your past mistakes, you are not your worst failures, you're not who people say you are, not the issues you wrestle with, not your inability to

change. Those things are **not** who you **are**. You've loved, you're held, you're whole, you're way more than enough. And God is standing in front of you with arms open wide. Desperate for you to drop those rocks, and just be loved.

I'm going to pray in a minute, and as I do that – if you want to put these things down, then let your hands become part of your prayer, and together we'll turn them upside down and choose to let go. Trusting God to do the work in us to make that real.

God we don't want to carry around lies of unworthiness, un-belonging, of not being good enough. We just want to be at home with you, and with each other. So as we turn our hands upside down now (instruct: so let's do that now) we pray that by your Spirit you would indeed set us free from all of the lies of who we're not. So that we could open our eyes – and hearts & hands – to who we are to you, and in you, and through you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

READING | *Affirmations: Who You Are in Christ*

Now that we've tried to drop the baggage of who we're not, I want to read just a tiny bit of what God has already said about who you are, straight from scripture.

And I want to read these words **over** you, so I'm going to say "you are", but as you try to take them into your heart and mind, and maybe even as you come back later to read them again – take them in as "**I. am.**"

- I am chosen. (Ephesians 1:4)
- I am known (Psalm 139)
- I am loved. (John 3:16)
- I am free. (John 8:32)
- I am a masterpiece. (Ephesians 2:10)
- I am a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- I am Christ's ambassador. (2 Corinthians 5:20)
- I am joyful. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- I am gentle. (Galatians 5:22-23)
- I am strong. (1 John 2:14)
- I am secure. (John 10:28-29)
- I am alive. (Romans 6:11)
- I am unashamed (Romans 8:1)
- I am kept by the power of God. (1 Peter 1:5)
- I am more than a conqueror (Romans 8:37)
- I am the light of the world (Matthew 5:14)
- I am a child of God. (Galatians 3:26)