

One of the most memorable stories that Jesus told is found in the 15th chapter of Luke's gospel. It's a story about a man who had two sons. One day the younger son came to his dad and said, "Give me the share of the property that will belong to me." Apparently, he was fed up with life at home and wanted to spread his wings and be out on his own. His request was rather cold hearted – "Dad, give me my inheritance money now; I don't want to wait until you die." So the father, no doubt hurt and brokenhearted, gave the young man his money.

The boy heads off to a distance place and really lives it up. He manages to blow through his inheritance quickly in self-indulgent decadent living. Desperate and broke, he gets a job feeding pigs (which is about as bad as it can get for a Jewish man). There's a famine in the land, and he's starving.

At that point he comes to his senses. He reasons, "Even the hired servants back home are better off than me." Then he comes up with a plan. He'll swallow his pride, go back home with his tail between his legs, and say something like this to his father: "Dad, I've sinned against heaven and against you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants."

Ashamed and apprehensive, he nevertheless starts the long journey back home. After many days of travel, he finally heads up the long driveway to the farmhouse. Much to his surprise, his dad has seen him, and hurries out to welcome him home. He nervously delivers the speech he has practiced. But just as he finishes admitting that he's no longer worthy to be called a son, his father cuts him off. "Quick, get this boy some fresh clothes to put on – the nicest outfit you can find. Start the fires because we're going to cook a feast and throw a party! For this son of mine was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found!"

Even though this is a simple story, it is profound. It's often called the parable of the prodigal son, but it would be better named the parable of the loving father. The boy in the story is us, in our waywardness and need of forgiveness. The father, of course, represents God, who loves us and runs out to welcome us back into His family even when we fall short and mess up our life.

One of the transformations that takes place in the boy's mind and heart is when he goes from "give me" to "make me." Sick of life at home he demands, "*Give me* my inheritance....now!" Later sick of life, in the far country, he goes back home and asks his father, "*Make me* like one of your hired servants."

We have made significant progress in our relationship with God when we move from a "give me" mode to a "make me" mindset. Some of us only want a God who will give us what we want. Give me this, give me that, dear Lord. Sure, there are times when it's quite appropriate to ask God for things, for as humans we often come face to face with our limited powers and resources, and need divine help. God wants to give us good things.

But a mature relationship with God goes beyond “give me” to “make me”. God, *make me*....a better husband, a better wife, a better parent, a better son or daughter, a better neighbor. Dear Lord, please make me....more thoughtful, more forgiving, more compassionate, more wise.

The younger son in the story found that his life was transformed for the better when he could say “make me” rather than “give me” to his father. This is also true of us.

Pastor Harry