

Created for Something Better

By
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“I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18)

[Editor’s note: You may have seen part of this sermon on this website entitled *Luke 15.18 Musings on the Prodigal*. Since that posting I found the remaining portions of this sermon and now post the entire work here. The partial version has been removed.]

An age old question that has engaged the wit and reason of profound thinkers of every generation is: Where is the missing link between man and beast? Diagrams have been drawn. X-rays have been taken of the prenatal development of man and animal to determine their likenesses and kinship in their embryonic stages. But every time the final analyses have been made, there remains a great gulf that cannot be crossed.

In the dawn of creation when all life was forming in the seedbed of God’s creative genius, he marked out a chasm between man and beast and declared in no uncertain terms that among all the creatures that he made; only man was created in his image and likeness. Only man is responsible to his maker for what he does with his life. Only man will have to stand before God at the Day of Judgment and give an account of how he has lived.

I am not going to take you to some palace or some seat of learning where culture is at high tide and where man has reached his farthest. No, I will take you to the bottom. Go with me to that far country of sin to a land of woe, want and wretchedness. Go to the lowest place in that land and let me show you a picture. It is the picture of a life wasted and squandered with riotous living, the picture of the downward plunge from the palace of peace and plenty to the hog pen of filth and poverty. The prodigal believed that all he

needed was money to spend and the freedom to do as he pleased. Though the setting of this story is two thousand years old, it is still with us today. Just look around and you will see wasted lives with expressionless faces and blighted character, human derelicts doomed to a Christless eternity. The prodigals of today are just like the prodigal in the Bible.

This is no isolated scene from other days. It is one of the tens of thousands of pictures from life's other side that we must reckon with today.

The tragic part of the picture is that he never realized that he was born for a noble destiny until he stood among the swine pens in a far country.

He never seemed to realize that he had a soul until he tried to feed it on the husks that the swine did eat.

He never realized that he was created for the companionship of angels until he was confined to the fellowship of the hogs.

It is when men come to grips with the cold realities of life that they turn their thoughts from the things around them to the eternal hills of light. I would like for the modern educators that propound the theory of the kinship of man and beast to come near and view the most graphic picture that Jesus ever painted, the picture of a man among the swine. The man never realized that he was out of place until he tried to eat the husks in the hog trough.

Then he came to himself and beheld for the first time his mean surroundings. As he poured the husks to the hogs and saw them eat their fill, they turned and lay down in the mud and were satisfied. But as they grunted contentedly in the mud and mire of that swine pen, the pangs of remorse broke over that wayward boy. He began to think of a

home far away and of the servants in his father's house. As his mind went back to other days, he may have mused:

Backward turn, backward Oh tide of years,
I am so weary of toil and tears.
Toils without recompense, tears all in vain,
Take them and give me my childhood again. (author unknown)

He discovered before it was too late that the swine pen was no place for him.

He discovered that he was made for something better.

He discovered that he was no kin to the hogs.

He discovered that a human being could not feed the immortal soul on hog feed.

Looking down at his muddy feet, the mud oozing up between his toes, he said,
“Feet, you were made to walk in green pastures and beside still waters.”

Looking at his calloused hands, swollen from hard labor, he cried, “Hands, you were not made for the slop pails of hell, but to handle the delicacies of a banqueting table.”

Looking at the beggars cloak that hung in tatters from his wasted, emaciated body, he said, “You were not made to wear these rags; you were made to wear the best robe of linen white. Tongue, you were not made to call the hogs; you were made to sing the high praises of God.”

Looking at the swine husks, tempted to eat the hog food, he must have remembered a table in a lighted pavilion far away, and said, “I was born to eat the fatted calf.”

At night as he fell upon his vermin invested pallet with a thousand darts of pain racking his tired body, he must have wept himself to sleep as he remembered he was not

made to sleep there, but he was born into a family of privilege and should be sleeping in the luxury of wealth.

Thus he came to himself and said, "I will arise and go to my father." He staggered to his feet and made that long journey home. He had tried everything in an effort to find a solution to his problem, but every day it got worse until he made that journey back home. That was the day that the sun began to shine again. The birds began to sing; the melodies of Heaven once more broke out in his soul. When he saw the old homestead in the distance and felt his father's arms about him, he forgot the years of waste and want in the glorious joy of the kiss of pardon. That night when he sat down to the table laden with the fatted calf and heard the merry making of the household servants, he realized for the first time in his life that the best place on earth was in his father's house.

I have always wanted to see a painted masterpiece of the return of the prodigal son. It has an appeal to the human emotions that does not grow old with the years. This world is a prodigal today, but it won't acknowledge. If the prodigal had not acknowledged his moral collapse, he would have died among the hogs. This modern Gospel preaching that will teach men to confess Christ today and join the church and tomorrow be back in the hog pen is just as unreasonable as to think that the prodigal son could live at his father's house and in the hog pens at the same time.

The only remedy that will save this generation from moral collapse is to come to itself and take the road of the prodigal back to God. If you ever get to the Father's house and get a taste of the good things at his table, you will never long for the filth of the far country again.