

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON



**THE DIOCESE
OF SHEFFIELD**
Renewed | Released | Rejuvenated



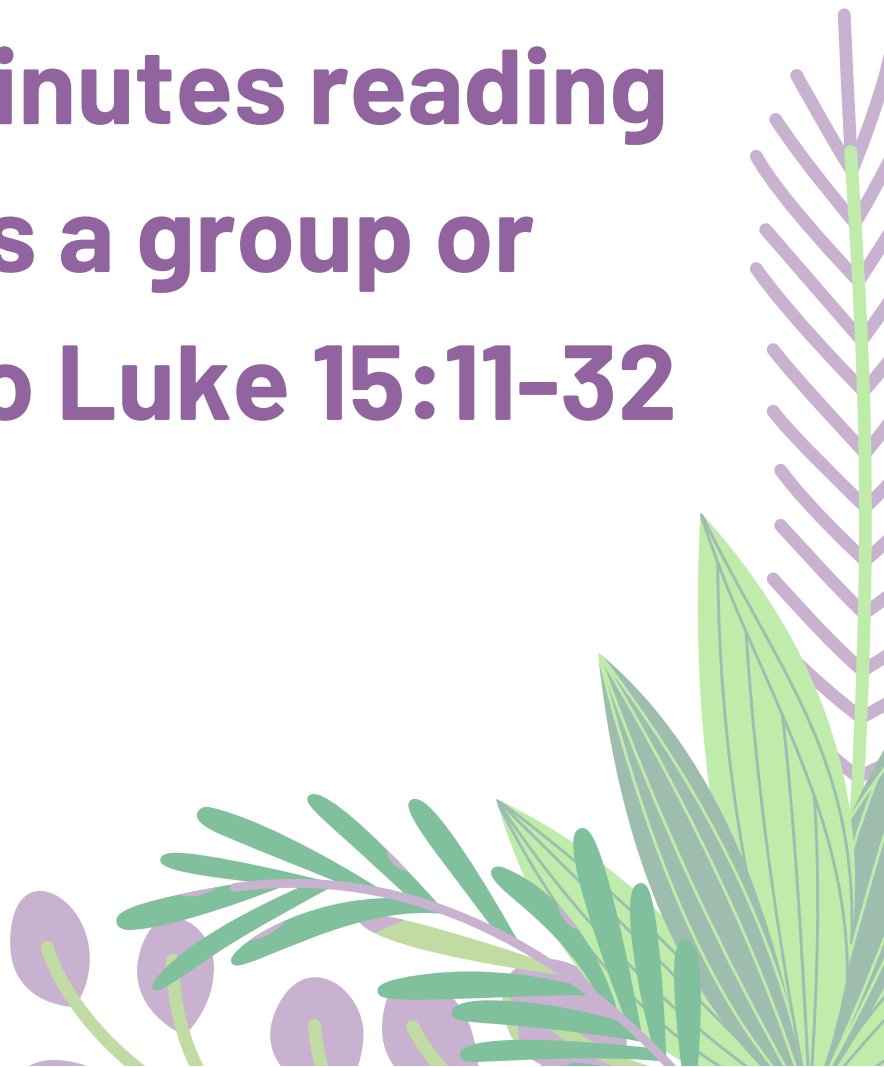
Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

Before you discuss the questions on the next page as a group, spend 5 minutes reading aloud as a group or listening to Luke 15:11-32



LET'S Talk



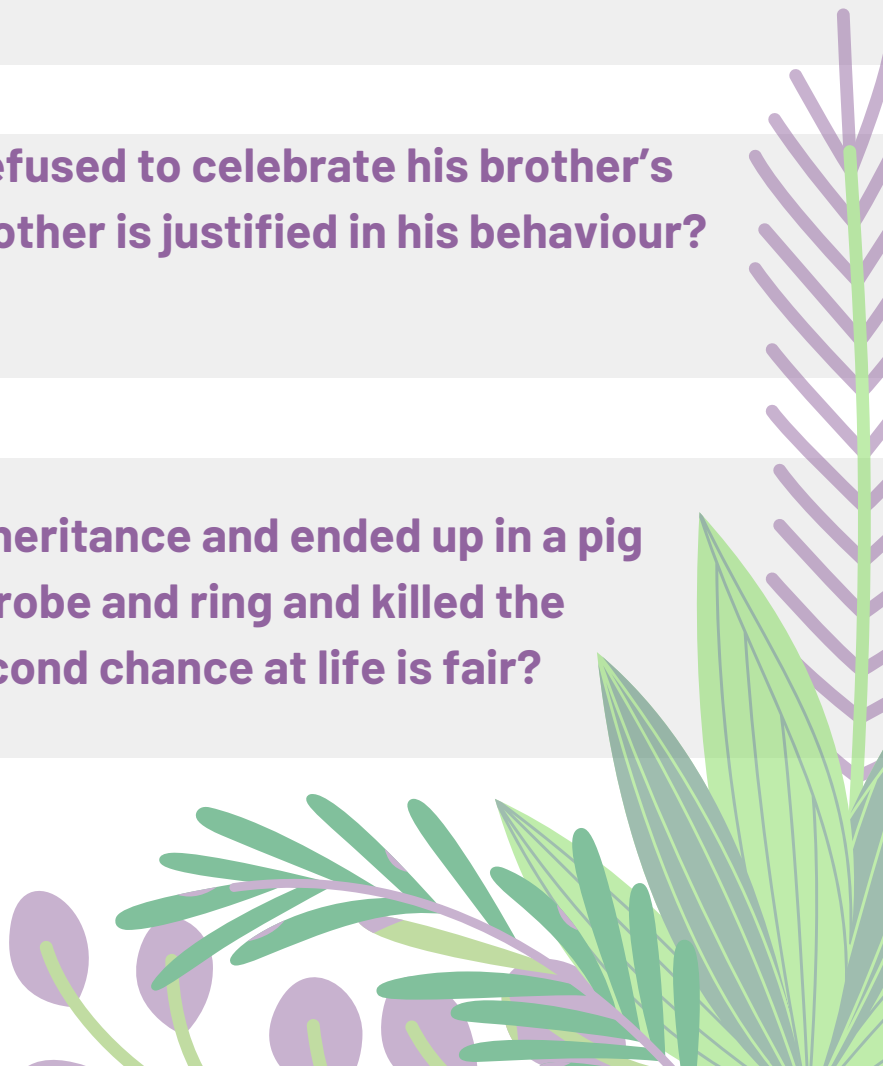
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

Which of the younger son, the older son or the father do you identify with the most? Why?

The father's response to the return of his younger son is radically generous. Have you shown or received generosity like this?

The older son was furious and refused to celebrate his brother's return. Do you think the older brother is justified in his behaviour? Why or why not?

The younger son spent all his inheritance and ended up in a pig sty. Yet his father gave him the robe and ring and killed the fatted calf. Do you think this second chance at life is fair?





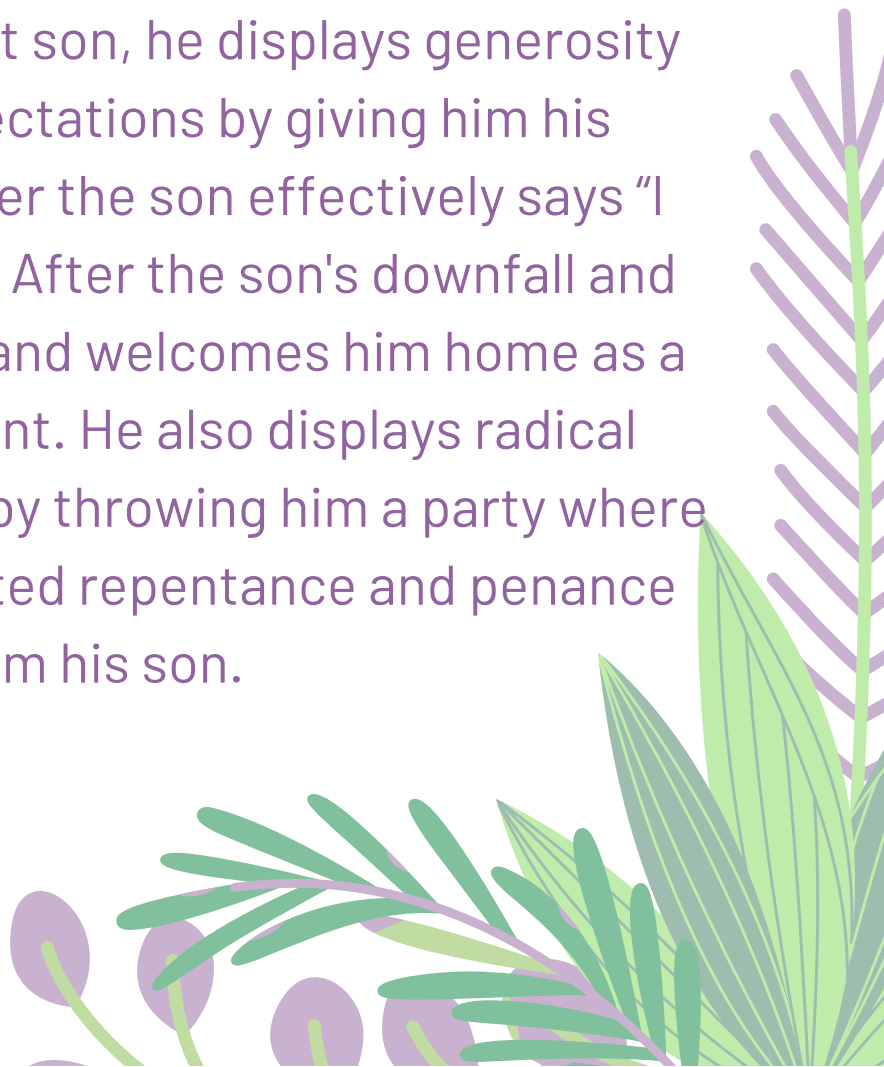
Reflection

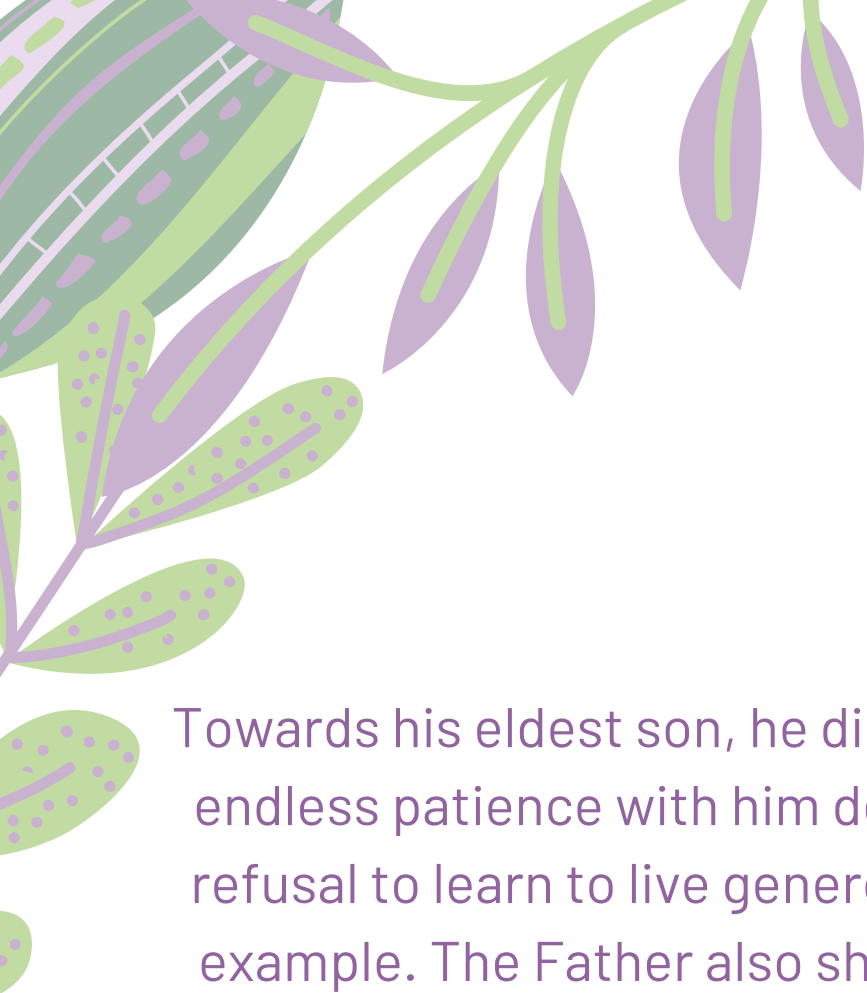
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Bishop Sophie Jelley.

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

This parable that Jesus told is often called the parable of the lost son or the prodigal son. Still, a better title might be the parable of the loving, generous father. This father is one of our most excellent biblical examples of generosity. He models generosity, sharing, giving, kindness, and love in this one parable.

Towards his youngest son, he displays generosity that shatters expectations by giving him his inheritance early after the son effectively says "I wish you were dead". After the son's downfall and waste, he embraces and welcomes him home as a son and not a servant. He also displays radical generosity and grace by throwing him a party where he could have expected repentance and penance from his son.





Towards his eldest son, he displays generosity in his endless patience with him despite the eldest son's refusal to learn to live generously from the father's example. The Father also shows impressive grace and mercy in responding to anger and jealousy from his eldest son. The Father never stopped hoping and believing in his eldest son. He even takes time out from the party to tell him that everything he (the father) has belongs to him (the son). What a good dad!

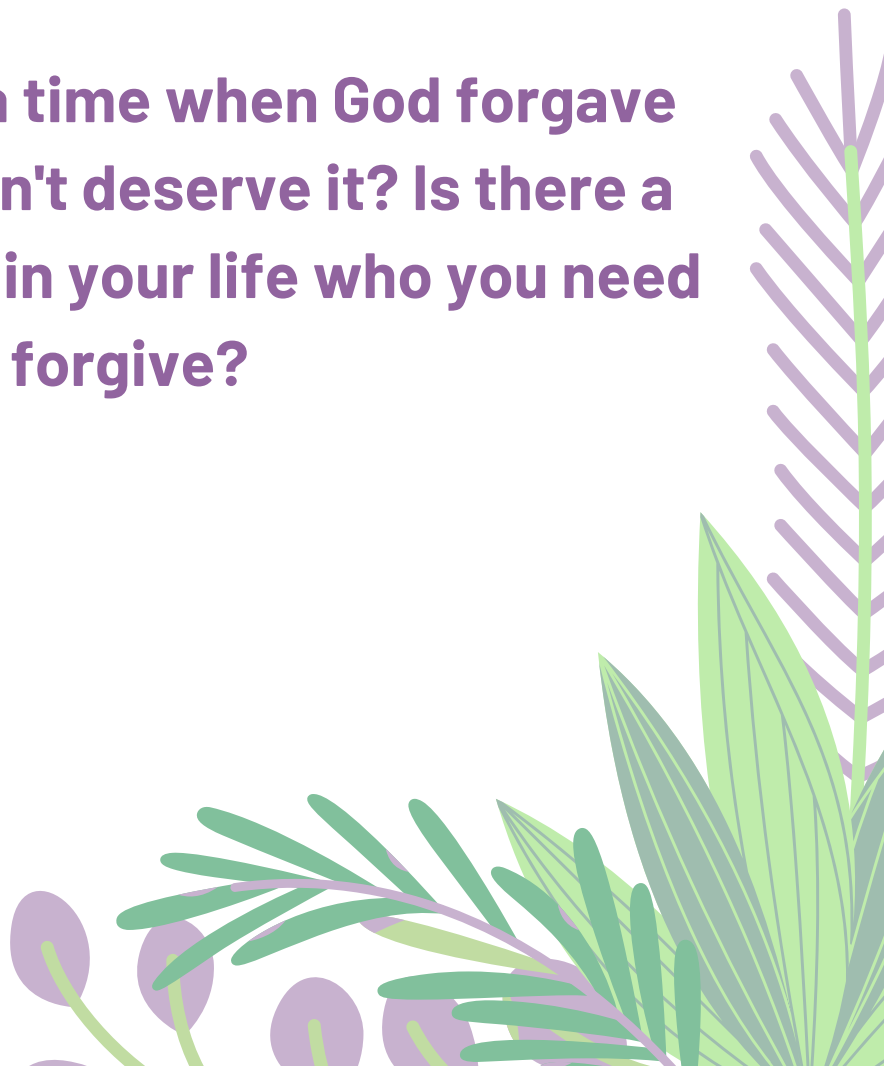
This father shows each of his sons the generous love God shows us. God loves each of us equally, showers us with blessings and acts with grace we don't deserve, and invites us into an abundant life where we look to share, give and celebrate with others.

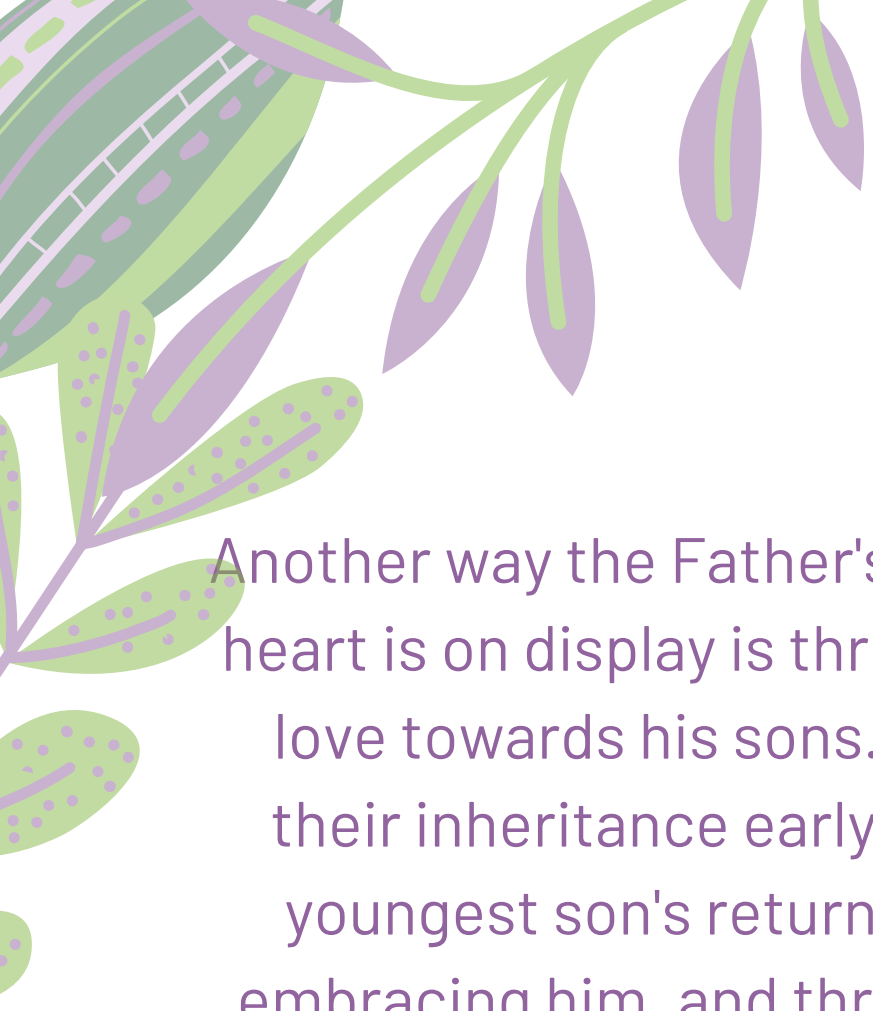
How might we respond?

The father acts with mercy and grace towards both of his sons and displays his loving and generous heart. Despite betrayal and belittling, the father responded with a kind heart and a tenderness that neither deserved. As a merciful father, God longs to speak to us with compassion and lavish his love upon us.

If only we could see everything he has belongs to us too.

Can you think of a time when God forgave you when you didn't deserve it? Is there a "younger brother" in your life who you need to forgive?





Another way the Father's loving and generous heart is on display is through his extravagant love towards his sons. He gifts both sons their inheritance early. He celebrates the youngest son's return by running to him, embracing him, and throwing a lavish party.

He returns the eldest son's anger with compassion and grace. God also longs to lavish this extravagant love upon his as our generous and loving Father.

Can you think of a time when God has lavished his extravagant love upon you? Is there anything you could do today to celebrate others? (e.g. encouraging someone with words, buying them a gift)

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord God, thank you that you are a loving, merciful and extravagantly generous Father. We pray that you form this extravagant generosity in us by allowing us to act with mercy and kindness and celebrate others. Please help us to lead lives of loving, giving and sharing. Amen!

