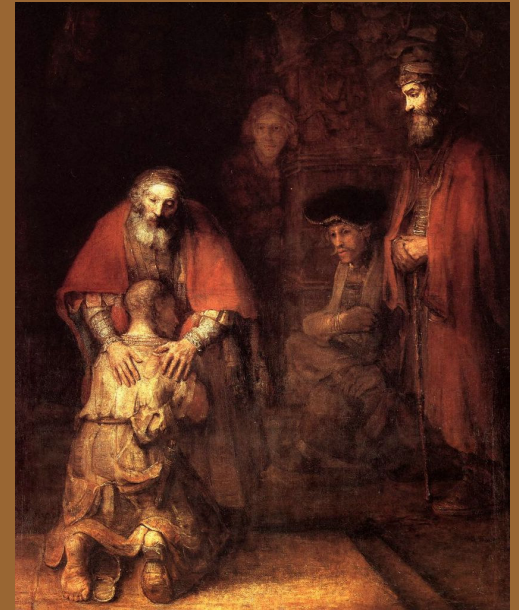




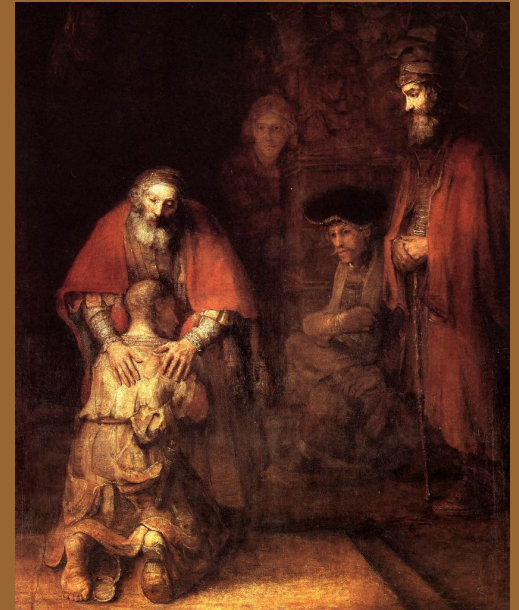
# The Prodigal Son

# Think...



- *What did you feel?*
- *What was your strongest feeling as you listened?*
- *What part of which parable made you feel that way?*
- *Why did it make you feel that way?*

# Rules for Interpretation of a Parable



1. Check the Context
2. Learn about the ordinary sense of the story
3. Try to determine the one point Jesus was trying to make.

The  
Lost  
Sheep



**Stupid!**



# The Lost Coin



**Ridiculous!**

# The Lost Son



(Giovanni Barbieri, 1619)

**Unthinkable!**

# Who are you?

- Younger Son?
- Older Son?
- Father?

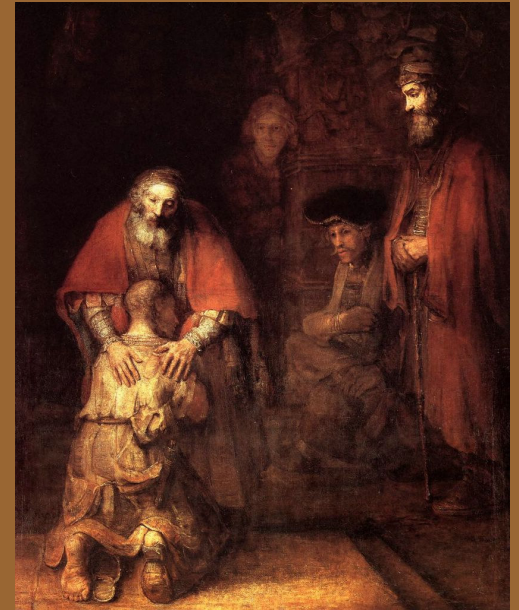
# Where are you?

- In Rebellion?
- In Judgment?
- In Love?

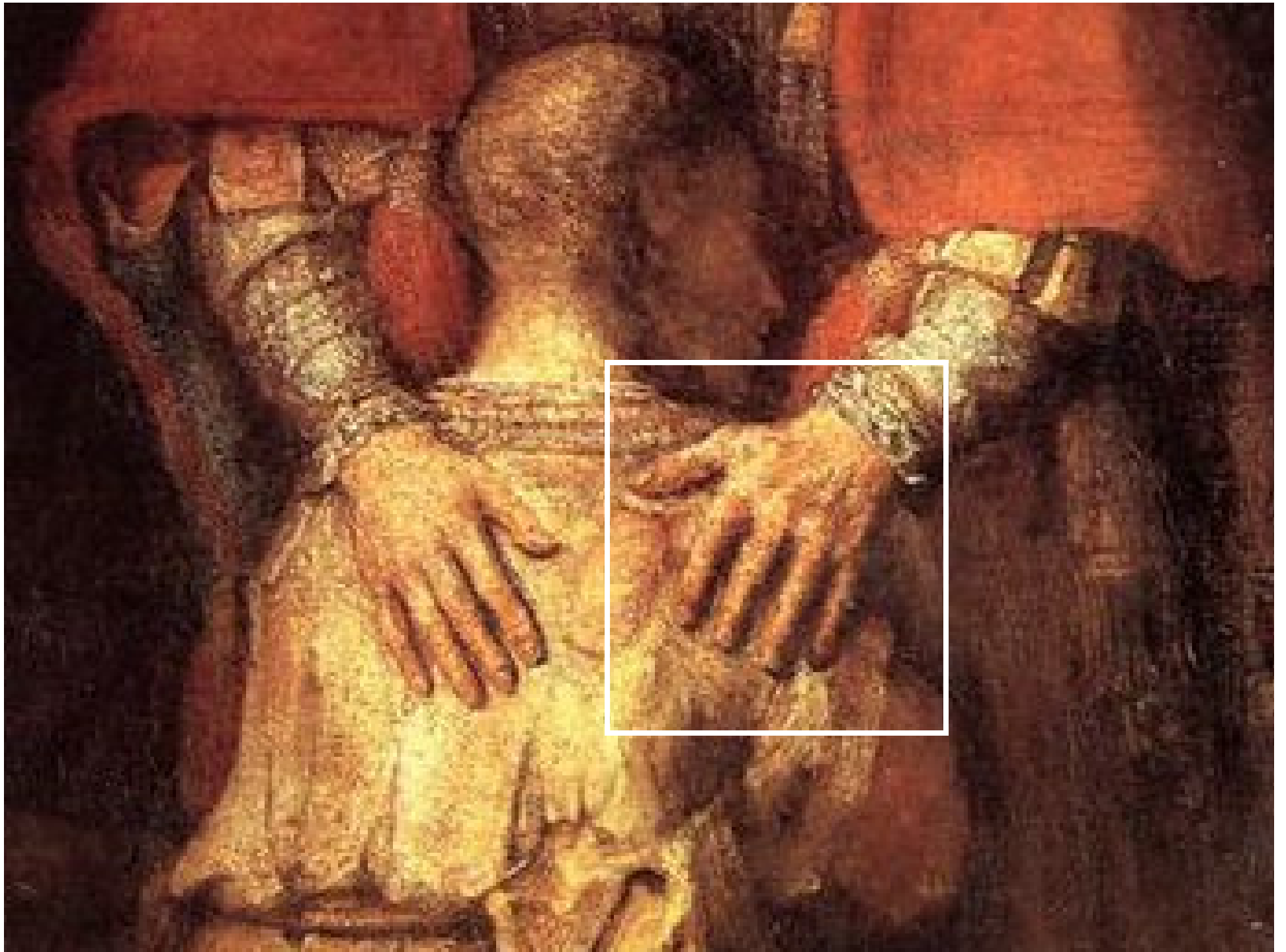
# Henri Nouwen

on *The Return of the Prodigal Son*

"Often I have asked friends to give me their first impression of Rembrandt's Prodigal Son. Inevitably, they point to the wise old man who forgives his son: the benevolent patriarch.



"The longer I look at 'the patriarch', the clearer it becomes to me that Rembrandt has done something quite different from letting God pose as the wise old head of a family. It all began with the hands. The two are quite different. The father's left hand touching the son's shoulder is strong and muscular. The fingers are spread out and cover a large part of the prodigal son's shoulder and back. I can see a certain pressure, especially in the thumb. That hand seems not only to touch, but, with its strength, also to hold. Even though there is a gentleness in the way the father's left hand touches his son, it is not without a firm grip.

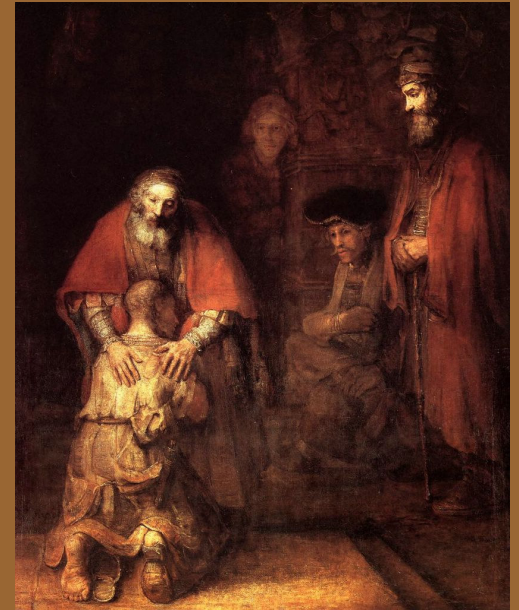


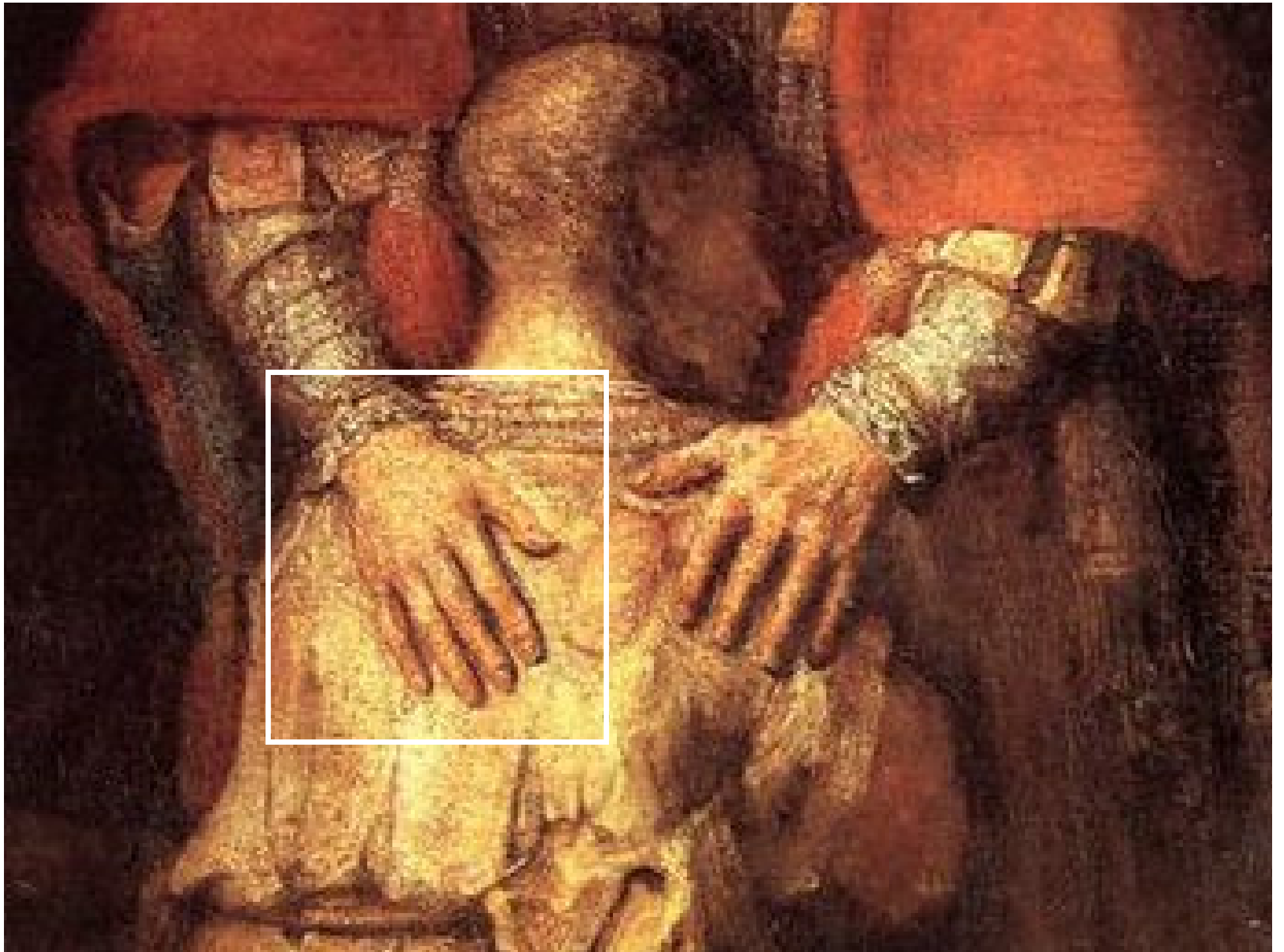
# Henri Nouwen

on The Return of the Prodigal Son

"How different is the father's right hand! This hand does not hold or grasp. It is refined, soft, and very tender. The fingers are close to each other and they have an elegant quality. It lies gently upon the son's shoulder. It wants to caress, to stroke, and to offer consolation and comfort. It is a mother's hand...."

"As soon as I recognized the difference between the two hands of the father, a new world of meaning opened up for me. The Father is not simply a great patriarch. He is mother as well as father. He touches the son with a masculine hand and a feminine hand. He holds, and she caresses. He confirms and she consoles. He is, indeed, God, in whom both manhood and womanhood, fatherhood and motherhood, are fully present."

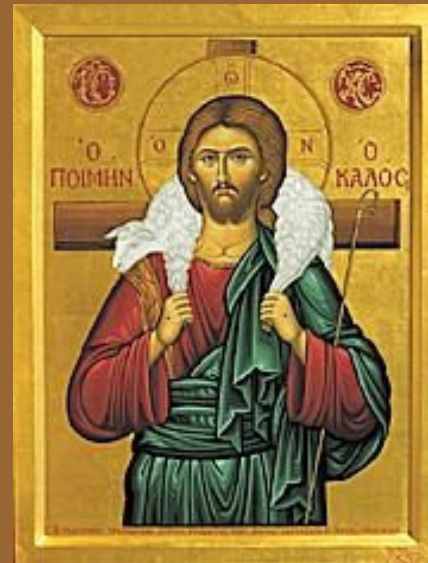






# Who are your lost sheep?

Those who are valuable to you and have wandered away from the faith, but you have never been able to justify the cost of time and energy it would take to get them back?



# Who are your lost coins?

Those who have wandered away from the faith, but just aren't worth giving up *anything* to bring back. They are of *no real value* to you.



# Who are your lost sons?

Those who have wandered away from the faith and have offended you greatly, to where you say, “They deserve what they get!” or “They are on their own!”



# More Context

- **The Dishonest Steward (16:1-13)**
  - *Squandered* master's property (Prodigal)
  - Cannot work or beg way into heaven
  - Forgiving others' debt best bet
- **The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31)**
  - Lazarus *longed to eat his fill* (Prodigal)
  - Rich man is pitiless (Older brother)
  - Who is my neighbor?
  - Am I my brother's keeper?

# Other Questions

- How *should* the Parable of the Prodigal Son have ended?
- *Should* the younger son ever get anything from his father or brother?
- How *should* the older son treat the younger now?
- What does this parable say about your own life *right now*?

