

The Prodigal Returns.

Jenny was never content working on her family's large blueberry farm. The farm had been in the family for three generations, and was one of the largest in California. Jenny and her older sister Caroline, worked in the office handling payroll, invoices and the scheduling of shipments. Their Dad oversaw all the field and packaging operations.

Jenny was always a go-getter with big ideas for expanding the business as surrounding farms had done. For years, she wrangled with her Dad to make changes that he deemed unnecessary. Fed up with working with what she called primitive business practices, she asked her Dad to give her the money Mom had left to her to get her Masters Degree.

"Honey, that money is our safety net until the harvest comes in this summer and our berries are sold." "Dad, this is not fair! That money is mine and I want it now!" Reluctantly, her Dad wrote out a check and handed it to her. "We'll just pray harder for a good crop with no problems until the berries are sold." Jenny grabbed the check, and in a haughty tone said, "if you had gone with chemical spraying, a good crop would be virtually assured." Leaving her sister to shoulder all the office responsibilities, Jenny set out for Silicon Valley to stay with a close school chum, Maria and her brother, Jake.

Maria, "this apartment is so small, how can we all live here?" "No worries Jenny, a bed folds out of the entertainment cabinet. It is very comfortable, and saves space. We are economizing because Jake and I invested heavily in a new startup tech company. Four of Jake's friends have created a new level of software, and already have financial backing to get up and running. We wanted to get in on the ground floor because that's where the big payoff comes in. It takes six months to a year to see a profit, so we downsized in the meantime, but soon we'll be living high in Malibu. Say, tomorrow I'll put in a good word for you at my company. Your business management skills will get you in the door."

Jenny did get a high paying job with Maria's firm. She spent quite a bit of her salary on upscale business clothes and on clothes for partying with her new friends. Her old car was soon traded in for a sporty BMW. She never really worried about what she spent because she had her nest egg - the money for her Master's Degree to rely on. Soon, weekend trips with the gang, sailing and jetting to other cities for the weekend, began to erode her nest egg. Week nights out on the town weren't cheap either. Jake and Maria began to see dividends from their investment and encouraged Jenny to invest too. Looking for long term dividends, Jenny invested eighty percent of her nest egg.

Jenny swung her BMW into the office parking garage. People were standing around looking at their smartphones. "What's going on," she asked? "The office doors are chained, shut by order of the Tax Division. Looks like we're out of a job." Frantic thoughts swirled in Jenny's head. "How would she pay her rent, car note and insurance? Maybe one of her friends would let her stay with them. None of them seemed to have room for her. Some friends."

With the remainder of her nest egg, she could live about two weeks in a cheap, extended stay hotel on the edge of town. It was an awful place, loud, and dingy. The BMW was repossessed and she had to sell her designer handbags and jewelry for cash to live on while looking for another job. Dinners were now burritos and frozen pizza. Maria called to tell her that their investment was gone due to a copyright infringement lawsuit. The company had gone into bankruptcy. "Just like my life" she thought. Her choices were down

to scraping by and continuing to live here, or swallow her pride and go home. The next day, Jenny ate breakfast at a convenience store and then bought a bus ticket home. She was too numb to even cry.

She had plenty of time on the bus to think about how she had squandered her money and hurt her Dad and sister. She would ask her Dad for a job sorting and packing blueberries. It was all she deserved, if that. The bus let her out near the fields and she started the long trek toward Dad's office. "Must be trouble in the fields" she thought, when she saw the foreman's all-terrain vehicle flying down the road toward her. "Do they think I'm an intruder?"

The ATV spun to a stop and her Dad ran to her, crying tears of joy. He hugged her for at least five minutes, telling her over and over that he loved her. He took her up to the house and told her to get cleaned up, then he called all his family members to join them for dinner in town that night. Next, he called Caroline at the office and told her to come home and get dressed for a celebration. Caroline faced her Dad and said "she wasn't going to the celebration dinner. Why should she? Jenny left us in the lurch, and I had to do all her work and mine. She turned her back on us, spent all her money, and now you want us to take her back like nothing happened? Even if she has asked for forgiveness, why should she be allowed to run the office now? How is it that she should have any part in the farm?"

Tears running down his face, Dad picked up his Bible and pointed Caroline to Luke 15:29-32. "Caroline dear, you have been here with me, faithfully working all this time. This celebration dinner is a picture of Jesus, when one of his sheep strayed and was lost. Jesus found the lost sheep and celebrated that all His sheep were safely back home. That's how it is with Jenny. She was lost to us, but now she is back home. This farm is mine, and it is yours too. Nothing has been taken from you and given to another. Today, we are really celebrating that your sister has seen the error of her ways, humbled herself and has come back to us with gratefulness and new found wisdom, and a right attitude. She is no longer lost to us. Now we can all live and work together in new found peace and harmony."

He gave her a kiss and told her to go get ready. It's almost time to meet the others. Thank you Lord, what a gift you have given us!

Luke 15:29-32:

But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you never gave me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'