INTRO: At this time we will look briefly at the parable that has come to be known as the parable of the prodigal son. The word prodigal means wasteful.

We may often learn much about a parable by examining the setting in which it is told. This case is no exception. READ LUKE 15:1-2.

The prodigal son in the parable represents those who love the world & its material resources & riches more than they love the One who made the world, those who have a tendency to discard the more noble things in life to wallow in luxury & temporal pleasures, the "publicans & sinners" & their kind.

I. FIRST SCENE: A YOUNG MAN DECIDES TO LEAVE HOME.

A. He loved his father's goods more than he loved his father, vs. 12-13.

B. He had no real gratitude or sense of value for the blessings that were his at home. He could have had the best of both realms.

1. Access to his father's possessions AND
2. His father's fellowship as well, vs. 31-32.

C. He desired "freedom" from authority, like many today who seek freedom only to find themselves enslaved to:

1. Alcohol or other addictive drugs, tobacco
2. Sexual immorality
3. Evil companionships, etc.
2 Pet 2:19, While they promise... liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brot into bondage.

II. THE SECOND SCENE: AWAY IN A FAR COUNTRY.
   A. In a country much removed from his father's house, his sins began to drag him farther down. In the far country he wasted his money, his time, his talents.

   1. Many a son & daughter in our time have drifted away into a far country without ever leaving the dwelling house of their parents. W. Nelson song: Today may be the day you walked away, but you left me a long, long time ago.

   2. Just like the customs agents & immoral sinners Jesus had in mind--who had gone into a far country without ever leaving the land of Israel. The far country of waste & destruction was in their own minds.

   B. In the far country, the young man began to experience poverty, shame & disgrace, vs. 14-16.

III. THIRD SCENE: THE WASTEFUL SON AWAKES TO HIS SORRY CONDITION & DECIDES TO DO SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE ABOUT IT.

   A. The text says he came to himself vs 17
   B. Having realized the sordid condition in which his materialism, selfishness
wastefulness had landed him, he made a momentous decision--he decided on a course of action, 18-20

1. The prodigal son is one of the best illustrations in all the Scripture of true repentance.

2. Repentance is a change of mind. Returning home was the fruit of repentance.

IV. SCENE FOUR: THE ERRING SON IS WELCOMED HOME.

A. The father's love reached out to him to draw him home, even before he got there, vs. 20.

B. His confession of sin paved the way for a complete restoration of fellowship & the joy of both father & son was made full, vs. 21-24.

C. Thus, Jesus explained His own joy in eating with customs agents & sinners, who were being restored to the fellowship of God.

D. Of course, the Pharisees also had a counter-part in Jesus' parable--but that's the subject of another lesson.

CONCLUSION: In this parable we have:

1. A warning for those who have not strayed. The sinner must reap the consequences of his sins.

3. An encouragement to the penitent: The Father will receive His erring child with open arms, when the error is renounced & fellowship will be restored.

Cox Springs, TX, May 28, 1967
Springhill, LA, April 9, 1972
La Porte, TX, December 13, 1981
Exton, PA, November 19, 1989
Shiloh, Mexia, TX, November 7, 1993
Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, June 19, 2005