

## Sunday Challenge for Children's Groups Week 4 (14<sup>th</sup> March)

# challenge

### Lent 4.

- Ask the children if there are any jobs Mum asks them to do that they really hate doing? How hungry would they need to be before they offer to do that job for their Mum? Is there any other reason they would do it for Mum?
- Read/tell the Bible story to the children, maybe using toy figures and farmyard animals

Luke 15.1-3; 11b-32

Some Pharisees/religious leaders were very cross that Jesus spent so much time with people they thought were bad and even ate with them.

So Jesus told this story:

Once there was a man who had two sons. One day the younger son asked his father if he could have his share of his father's property now. The father agreed to do this. A few days later the younger son packed up all his belongings and went on a journey to another country. But the young man was not very wise and soon spent all his money on parties and things that didn't last very long. Just as he had spent all his money there was a famine in that country. The young man had no money to buy food or somewhere to live. He could not find a good job either. He was so desperate that he ended up doing the worst job he could ever think of doing – feeding pigs. In fact he was so hungry he would even have eaten the pigs' pea pods. While he thought about this he suddenly realised what a foolish young man he had been. "Why, even my father's workmen have more than enough to eat, yet here am I, dying of hunger!" He then decided he should go back home, say sorry to his father and ask if he could be one of his father's workmen. "After what I've done, I'm not good enough to be his son any more," he thought. So the young man set off home.

Now his father had been watching out for his younger son ever since the young man left home.

When he saw his son on the road he was filled with love for him and ran to meet him. He put his arms round his son and kissed him. His son said, "Father I have treated you and God very badly. I am not good enough to be your son anymore." Before he could say any more his father called his servants and told them to fetch the best robes for his son, sandals for his feet and a ring for his

finger. He then said, "Go and kill the fattest calf and prepare a feast. We are going to celebrate. I thought my son was dead, but he is alive. I thought he was lost, but now he is found!" And they began to celebrate.

However, the young man's older brother had been out in the fields. When he came home he heard all the music and dancing. He asked one of the servants what was going on. The servant answered, "It's your brother. He's come home safe and sound so your dad's giving a big party to celebrate." The older brother felt very angry. He was so angry he wouldn't join the party. His father came out to beg him to come in. "Why should I?" the older son asked. "I've worked like a slave for you all these years. I've always done what you wanted. But you've never even given me a young goat to cook and have a party with my friends. However, when this good-for-nothing son comes back you roast the best calf for him!"

"Son, son," his father replied. "You are always with me. Everything I have is yours. But we *had* to celebrate and rejoice. I thought your bother was dead, but he is alive. I thought he was lost, but now he is found."

### **Wonder/discuss**

- Why the younger son wanted to leave home
- How his Mum and Dad must have felt
- How hungry he must have been to work with pigs and eat their food. (*You may wish to mention that Jews think pigs are unclean and won't have anything to do with them or eat pig meat*)
- What the younger son thought his father would say/do
- How his father felt when he saw his son coming and how his Mum might have felt
- Why the older brother felt angry. Have they ever felt things are unfair at home?
- How we would like to be treated when we are sorry for doing something wrong.
- What the father felt about his two sons
- If mothers could be like this too
- What the story might tell us about God

## Prayer

Sit in a circle on the floor. Give every child two small pieces of rice paper and a pencil. Put a bowl of water in the centre of the circle. On one piece of paper ask the children to draw or write something wrong they have done. Ask them to think who they hurt and how they can show they are sorry.

Invite the children to put the paper into the bowl of water and see it begin to dissolve.

Ask the children to draw or write on the second piece of paper something someone has done that has upset them. Ask them to think how Jesus' story might show them how to treat that person.

Invite the children to put the paper into the bowl of water and see it begin to dissolve.

Thank-you, Jesus, for showing us that God loves us just like the father in the story.  
Let all the bad things we do, and the bad things people do to us,  
dissolve like these words and pictures in the bowl. **Amen**

## Activity

Imagine what food the children would like to have at a feast to welcome back someone who they thought was lost. Or to thank their mums for loving them even when they are naughty. The children could draw or paint the feast, make a collage or model food from modelling clay. Or you could make/decorate pig/cow biscuits.

