

Once upon a time, there was a rich man with two sons.

[Ask for 3 volunteers to be the man and his two sons. Have adults to stand with them and read their parts if necessary.]

The younger son thought about how rich his Dad was. He thought about all the fun that he could be having if *he* was rich. And he thought to himself,

[HOLD UP SIGN every time this phrase is used.]

“That’s not fair!”

So he went to his Dad, and he said,

“I want my share of the family money. I want it now.”

So his Dad gave him the money, and he packed up all his belongings and moved to a distant land.

Well, his big brother wasn’t very pleased to see him getting all that money. He thought,

“Why didn’t Dad just say no?”

And he thought to himself,

“That’s not fair!”

But things weren’t going too well for the younger brother. Oh, he had great fun spending all his money. But then there were hard times in the land where he was living. There wasn’t enough food to go round, and he began to starve.

And he thought to himself,

“That’s not fair!”

He was so desperate that he even got a job looking after pigs. He grew hungrier and hungrier. Even the pigs were better fed than he was!

And he thought to himself,

“That’s not fair!”

And then, one day, he started to think about his Dad. And he thought,

“Even the servants at home have enough food to eat, and here am I starving!”

And then, for the first time, he thought,

“It’s all my own fault.”

When he thought about how badly he’d behaved, he felt ashamed.

And he thought to himself,

“That’s not fair!”

He thought,

“The way I behaved really wasn’t fair to Dad. I’ll go home and say sorry to him. I know I’m not good enough to be his son any more, but maybe he’ll let me work for him.”

And he set off home.

But what do you think? When he was still a long way off, his Dad saw him coming. Filled with love for him, his Dad ran down the road to meet him, and gave him a great big hug.

“I’m so sorry, Dad,” said the younger son. “I know I’m not good enough to be called your son any more.”

But his Dad called for the servants. He said,

“Quick! Bring my son the best clothes, and a ring for his finger, and sandals for his feet. Get the best calf and let’s have a feast!”

The younger son didn’t understand. He knew how badly he’d behaved, and he thought to himself,

“That’s not fair!”

But his Dad wasn’t thinking about what’s fair. His Dad was only thinking about how much he loved his son. He said,

“Celebrate with me! This son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he’s found!”

And the party began.

But, oh dear, the older son had been out in the fields working, and when he came home and discovered the party, he was furious!

And he thought to himself,

“That’s not fair!”

And then he shouted at his Dad,

“That’s not fair!”

And he said,

“All these years I’ve worked for you, and done everything you’ve asked me to do. And you’ve never had a feast for me. Yet when this other son of yours throws away half your money, you welcome him back with open arms and throw him a party!”

And he shouted even louder,

“That’s not fair!”

And his Dad said, very quietly,

“No, it’s not. You’ve been with me all this time. You know that everything I have is yours. You’ve never made the mistakes that your brother has. But now we must celebrate, because he’s come home. He was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he’s found!”

Lots of people feel like the younger son used to. They see other people with more money or more friends or more success, and they think to themselves,

“That’s not fair!”

And some people make bad choices, like the younger son did. And then, when things go wrong, they think to themselves,

“That’s not fair!”

And some people wonder, when they hear this story, why the Dad let the younger son mess up so badly. And why he didn’t punish him.

And they think to themselves,

“That’s not fair!”

But Jesus says that God is like that Dad. He loves us too much to force us to be good. He loves us so much that he lets us choose for ourselves. And he loves us so much that when we mess up, and say sorry, he runs down the road to meet us.

That's how awesome our loving Father God is. When things go wrong, he steps in to put them right. He doesn't stop to think,
“That's not fair!”

He loves us so much that he sent Jesus to die on the cross, so that every time we say sorry and really mean it, we can be forgiven.

Let's say a prayer to him now.

Father God,

thank you for loving us.

Thank you for forgiving us every time we mess up.

Please send your Holy Spirit to help us to be the people you made us to be.

We ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

That's

not

fair!