

VOYAGE AND RETURN: LOSING OURSELVES, FINDING OURSELVES

VIDEO TWO

What's the best thing about going away? Terry Pratchett wrote:

"Why do you go away? So that you can come back. So that you can see the place you came from with new eyes and extra colours ... Coming back to where you started is not the same as never leaving."

That's why journeys there and back again make brilliant stories. Jesus' own version is masterful.

"There was a man who had two sons." Neither were happy. They're bored and frustrated. But there's a difference: The younger is impulsive; the older, dutiful.

So the older son stays quiet, resentment building. But his younger brother has other plans:

"Father, give me my share of the estate."

"You know, dad, being your son's great. Your stuff's amazing... but I want it without... you."

What will dad do?

"He divided his living between them"

The older son stays whilst the younger makes his dream a reality. Setting off into his own Wonderland.

At first it's brilliant... Until it isn't. His money, then his food, then his friends, all run out. And he ends up with nothing. Sitting in a pigsty, longing to eat pig food. For a young Jewish boy who wouldn't normally touch a pig, there's nowhere lower to sink.

But sometimes it takes a pigsty to recognise our reality.

One day, he *"comes to his senses."* Sitting in the muck, he remembers his father's generosity. And he braces himself to make the journey home.

But what will happen? After all, he doesn't even deserve to be his father's lowliest servant.

So, he nervously journeys back, practicing his apology speech. What he doesn't realise is that dad's been searching the horizon for months...

Back home, the Father is waiting on his porch. Then he spots a figure. He'd know that walk anywhere! Suddenly he's off past the gate, running down the road, to throw his arms around his dishevelled boy.

He embraces him not as a servant, but as a son.

The younger son's realisation in the pigsty was right. His father *is* good and generous—but beyond his son's wildest dreams.

Only as he returns, after travelling so far away, can he truly understand the goodness he had left behind.

But where's his older brother?

He stayed where he was. Now all his resentment explodes:

"All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends."

The older son doesn't see a generous father, but a slave-driver. He sulks. He won't join the celebrations. Without ever leaving the farm he's as far away from home as his brother ever was.

But his father hasn't changed. As his older son pouts over the young goat he doesn't have, he graciously invites him in: "Enjoy the fatted calf and dancing. Enjoy your brother!"

What will he do?

Jesus doesn't tell us.

One voyage and return has finished beautifully. This one is yet to be completed.

But here's Jesus' genius: we're right here. Are we in the pigsty with the younger son? Or sulking like the older son?

Will we come to our senses? Will we recognise the goodness of God our Father? And will we come home to Him?