Sermon: **“My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours”** (Luke 15.31)

Rembrandt’s Picture – the Return of the Prodigal Son. Describe the scene and characters.

[1] Who are these people?

* Father – love for family, forgets ‘norms’ of society, only wants to forgive (NB he forgives before he knows his son’s penitence).
* Younger – (threadbare clothes, one shoe off), selfish, wasteful, yet repentant
* Older – reliable, standoffish, resentful (**this son of yours**(v30), *not this brother of mine*)
* Bystanders (including the mother in the shadows) – watching the drama

[2] Are there times when we are like them?

* Love for our family, does that love sometimes mean tossing aside tradition, forgiveness   
  *Martin Luther: “Forgiveness is not an oc­casional art, it is a permanent attitude.”*
* Selfish, wasteful (like our Western society?), repentant.
* Are we reliable, trustworthy, yet sometimes distant and resentful of others who receive God’s love?
* Do we watch the drama of others without getting involved?

[3] Jesus represents them too! But in a true sense.

* True Father – grieving at separation, looking out for us, welcoming us home, forgiveness.
* True Younger – he loses his inheritance in a strange land, yet also returns to the Father’s love.
* True Older – responsible, obedient to the Father (yet no resentment)
* True Bystander – watching over all we do, no interference without invitation.

NB. Both brothers think of themselves as servants. See vv19 & 29.

Yet father continues to treat both as sons. See vv24 & 31 (TEXT)

Too often we see ourselves as God’s servants, toiling away in church & community with no thanks/rewards.

Yet God sees us as daughters and sons – TEXT. What good news!