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Written by Nathanael Vissia

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An rfour.org Children's Time Message

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Written for Sunday, March 6, 2016

Lent – 4th Sunday – Lectionary Year C

Scripture: [Luke 1-3, 11b-32](#) [**Summary:** *The Prodigal Son*]

Supplies Needed: No supplies needed

ASK (a.k.a *The On-Ramp*)

- Good morning!
- Do you know what a parable is? (it's a type of story that Jesus often told to help people think about God)
- The parable we heard in today's story is often called, "The Prodigal Son."
- Do you know what "prodigal" means? (it means "wasteful")
- Jesus told this story to help us better think about who God is and how God treats us.
- To help us better understand the story, I'm going to retell it.
- Listen closely, because I'll have a question for you after I finish the story.

TELL (a.k.a *The Freeway*)

- Pretend that you, each and every one of you, has millions and millions of toys.
- And you have two friends, named Careless (because she always leaves the lights on and breaks a lot of toys) and Bitter (because he actually liked the taste of medicine, can you *imagine?*).
- Bitter and Careless come over every day and play with you and your millions and millions of toys.
- One day, Careless asks if she could take a whole bunch of your toys home so that she could play with them when she's not visiting. Because you have so many toys, you're like, "Of course. Go ahead!"
- So Careless grabs some sleds and little red wagons and just piles toys and toys and toys into them.
- Then she leaves.

- The next day, Careless doesn't show up. No call. Nothing.
- The following day, Careless doesn't show up again. No call. Nothing.
- The third day, when Careless doesn't show up, Bitter says, "Let's go see if she's home." So off you go.
- As you're walking down the street, you see from afar all sorts of children in Careless' yard.
- They are all playing with your toys.
- You feel very sad because you now know that Careless has been using your toys to replace you with other friends.
- You go home without talking to Careless.
- Bitter keeps coming over, though, and you and he keep having a good time playing with all your toys. But, you miss Careless.
- Then, one day, a year or so later, Careless shows up.
- Turns out all of her new, so-called friends kept stealing and breaking all the toys (YOUR TOYS) until there were none left.
- Once the toys were gone, so were her so-called friends.
- So for a number of days, she stayed at home all alone and very sad.
- Finally, she thought about you and how you were always so good to her and welcoming and kind. She thought maybe you wouldn't ever want to see her again, but she thought she should at least apologize and then ask if she could just watch you and Bitter play with the toys.
- So that's what she does. She apologizes and asks if she can watch you and Bitter play with the toys.
- Bitter tells you that you should send her away.
- What do you think – what would you say to Careless?
- *[take a couple of answers; if there are more hands than a couple, tell them that you have to continue with the Children's message but that you would love to hear all of their answers after worship]*

SHARE the Good News (a.k.a. *The Destination*)

- So it sounds like most, if not all of you, didn't listen to Bitter's advice. But his advice seems reasonable, doesn't it?
- Careless was careless in a mean and hurtful way. Why let her even stay nearby? Just send her away, right?
- But, the point of the story is to remind us that God doesn't *just* forgive us and when we're Careless or when we're Bitter.

- Instead, God says to us when we're careless, "Come on in! It's great to have you back! Here are some more toys to play with!"
- And God says to us when we're bitter, "Why are you so bitter? The toys that were taken and broken weren't even your toys. Look at all the toys that are still here to play with! Let's go play!"
- And because God forgives us and loves us when we are careless and bitter, we can then receive that forgiveness and love and share it with others when they are careless and bitter, too.
- And that's the Good News for today.

CLOSING Prayer

Dear God,

Dear God,

Thank you for loving us...

Thank you for loving us...

...even when we are careless or bitter.

...even when we are careless or bitter.

Help us to receive your love and forgiveness...

Help us to receive your love and forgiveness...

...so that we can then share it with others.

...so that we can then share it with others.

Amen