



## Grain

We can still hold our youth accountable in a youthful setting rather than exposing them to psychological, mental, emotional, and sexual trauma.  
–Ramiah Whitehouse (referring to criminal justice)

## Field

15This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”<sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable: <sup>11</sup>Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup>When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup>He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup>But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ <sup>20</sup>So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Lk. 15:2b-3; 11-20

## Thoughts

What if the father had not forgiven his son? That would be conceivable in many, if not all, cultures. I have witnessed and heard of family members cutting ties with one another over far less than someone requesting one’s inheritance prematurely and then squandering the money.

Rev. Niveen Sarras in her recent commentary in “Working Preacher,” refers to N. T. Wright who says that the younger son’s request was like saying “‘I wish you were dead.’” Rev. Sarras, who serves Immanuel Lutheran Church in Wausau, says that as a Palestinian born and raised in Bethlehem, she recognizes how “shame-honor culture is dominant in modern Palestine as it was dominant in first-century Palestine.” She says that children who request their inheritance early “lose their respect and honor, and their community ostracizes them.”

In a story about an unforgiving parent, what scenarios can you envision? Maybe the younger son would have become more lost. Had he gotten back on his feet, he still may have remained on the outside of his family. If he had children perhaps they would also be ostracized. What types of cycles and unresolved grief would have been perpetuated?

Withdrawing from a person may be needed in abusive situations. But when are we caught in unhealthy cycles of exclusion? Wisconsin is one of three states where youth who are 17 years old automatically are sent into the adult justice system, decreasing young people’s ability to get the services they need and increasing recidivism. Whom are we cutting off and throwing away?

Regardless of our imperfect systems, God does not separate from us. May we be graced to be part of cycles of compassion in our personal and public lives. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy