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The Prodigal Son and our times

by Joe Ferullo

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It's not often that Gospel parables get discussed on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*, but columnist David Brooks has a smart analysis of the Prodigal Son and how it should be applied to the nation today.

Brooks looks to the famous parable for answers to the vexing social problems confronting the U.S. The class divide in the country is taking on social as well as economic dimensions: The upper strata stay in school, marry later, and have children only after they are married. Below them are groups that make up the rules as they go regarding education, household stability and children.

The entire society suffers the consequences of those actions, but how to effect behavioral change? Looking toward the Gospels, Brooks says ungenerous scolding and sanctimony will only drive people further away from the mainstream -- rather, he says, social policy must be like the father in the Prodigal Son story: understanding, forgiving, embracing, leading by example.

Read the column.

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