

## The lost son continued

The eldest son was sorry to see his younger brother leave the farm. Secretly, he may have been a little envious, but he felt a great loyalty to his father and was happy with his life on the farm. He knew that, one day, the farm would be his and, now his brother had taken his share, everything he and his father did in the meantime to build up the farm would eventually be passed on to him. His brother would have no right to any future share, no matter how successful the farm became.

During all the time his brother was away, the eldest son worked hard and the farm prospered. Occasionally he would wonder what his little brother was doing, but, generally, he was too busy to think much about him – there was so much to do. The farm covered a vast area and sometimes, at lambing time or when a wolf was on the prowl, he would be out in the fields for days at a time, sleeping under the stars or in a rough shelter.

It was early evening, after one such period away, that he returned to the house. As he approached, he noticed that there seemed to be a lot of activity. He could smell cooking and hear music playing. He saw one of the servants drawing water from the well and asked him what was happening.

The servant replied 'Your brother has come back and your father is throwing a party to celebrate because he's home safe and sound.'

The eldest son could hardly believe it. Why should his brother, who deserted his father and the farm, be treated so well? How was his return a cause for celebration? He was so angry and bitter about this turn of events that he decided to not even enter the house while the party was going on.

When his father heard that his eldest son was outside and refusing to come in, he went out to him.

His father could see how upset his eldest son was, but begged him to come in and join the party. He was surprised that his eldest son was not thrilled, like he was, about his brother's return. He was taken aback by the anger in his son's voice when he said:

'I've worked for you all these years while my brother has been away. Because I've given 100 per cent, the farm has grown and prospered, I've done everything you've asked of me without question. Now my brother, who deserted us and wasted his money in the city, is being given a party. You've never done anything like that for me – it's just not fair.'

His father put his arm around his son and explained:

'You, my eldest son, are always here with me and everything I have is yours. Your brother was foolish, but, when he went away, anything could have happened – he could have become an outcast, he could have been put in prison, he could even have died and been lost forever – but he has come back. He is sorry for what he has

done and knows he does not deserve a celebration, but, because he has come back, I want to welcome him and I want you to be pleased for him, too. He was lost, but now he is found. Please come in and join us.'