

## The Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 27, 2022

**The Lessons:**           Isaiah 12:1-6  
                                   Psalm 32  
                                   2 Corinthians 5:16-21  
                                   Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

**The Hymns:**           # 915                    *Today Your Mercy Calls Us*  
                                   # 744                    *Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound*  
                                   # 726                    *Children of the Heavenly Father*

**The Collect:** Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reign with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### The Sermon:

#### Sermon Luke 15:1-3; 11-32

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The text for the sermon is the Gospel Reading for today, from the Fifteenth chapter of Luke, in which we hear the parable of the “The Return of the Lost Son.” At the end of the parable, Jesus said these words: **31 “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’” Amen.**

### Introduction:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*Illustration:* This is the replica (pointing to the painting) of the original painting of “The Return of the Prodigal Son” which is now in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. This painting is an oil painting by Rembrandt, the famous Dutch painter.

But unlike the real story of the parable of the prodigal son in the Gospel of Luke the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter, here we see the older son as part of the “welcoming scene” of the younger son. Here we see the portrait of the older son: stiffed, indignant, careless, and angry. As inauthentic as the painting is, Rembrandt wanted to show that the parable is really about the Father’s relationship with the two sons. In this parable, we learn the older son’s indignation is just like our indignation towards God. But the message of our text is that ALL THAT GOD HAS IS OURS.

### I.

This story shows us that there is freedom for the sons being at their father’s house: there is adequate food, clothing, and shelter. This is just like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. They had everything they need and want (for that matter). In fact, what belonged to God, belonged to them. Meanwhile, God gave them Free Will – He did not tie them from doing what they wanted. At the same time, God told them the consequence of doing what they wanted to do. Likewise, in this parable, we see the father’s desire of his sons – to be free in being with him in his house.

Yet, we also see the younger son’s desire to be “independent.” – whatever that means. I wonder what he was thinking when he asked his father to give him his share in the estate. In most cultures you don’t ask for inheritance before the death of your father. So, perhaps he was wishing that his father was dead...

This attitude of being independent and free is quite familiar to us these days. In fact, it is highly praised. Of course, there is nothing wrong with being independent. However, it becomes a problem when you want to declare your independence from God...which leads you to where the prodigal son had gone: death, darkness, and hopelessness.

Transition: The good news is that the Lord does not give up on us. We are His beloved daughters and sons.

### 2.

So, we see in this parable that the father’s heart is with his son. Obviously, the father is seeking his son, at least in his mind, if not in his feet.

Brothers and sisters, God has been looking for us since the fall. **Isaiah** tells us in Chapter 53:6 **“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”** In His love and mercy, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from where we were – darkness and death! And only through the blood of Jesus, that was shed on the cross, we have been healed. You see, while Jesus is telling them the parable, he was heading towards His final mission: to die on the cross on behalf of them and us.

We are by nature, rebellious people. And we go deeper and deeper in our sin, which in the beginning, it seems to be exciting and enjoyable, until we hit the rock-bottom. That’s

what happened in this parable...the younger son, **“had spent everything, a severe famine arose in 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 into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.”** (vv 14-16).

When he lost everything he had, when he felt so helpless, **“Then he came to his senses: ‘how many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!’”** (v 17).

Yet, the Lord is merciful and compassionate. He provides more than we expected. So, the story goes on...that the son returns home to his father to be hired as a servant. Although his motive was to get food in his father’s house, his father didn’t even wait to hear his son’s confession. Rather, his love was so deep that he, **“saw him and was filled with compassion for him (v 20).** Indeed, the father’s love is true love that gives rest and peace. Yes, in His arms there is peace that the world and everything in it can not give. Yes, we go and squander and live in misery, but the Lord seeks and finds us and restores our right as His children. John in his first letter says, **“Behold, how great is the love of the father has lavished on us, that we should called the children of God! And that’s what we are!”** (1 John 3:1a).

*Transition:* Brothers and sisters, I would like to pause a question for a second: *why did Jesus tell this parable?* The answer is in verses 1 and 2: **“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”**

### 3.

Unlike the portray in this painting, the older son was *not* in the house; he was in the field. Luke tells us in verses 25 to 27: **“When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So, he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.”** And as he heard the news of his young brother’s returning home, instead of rejoicing, he was so angry. But why?

You see, the older son is resentful because his brother is not only forgiven, but also was welcomed as a “celebrity.” So, the older brother seems to say: “I deserve the celebration, not him.”

Yes, our attitude towards God can become like the older son, “Look! All the years I have given to my church. Look at the people I have invited to church. Doesn’t all that count?” The older Son said to his father, **“Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends”** (v 29).

But his father answers with love, **“My Son, you are always with me...(v 31).** Even though his motive was “selfish,” ultimately it is the love of the father that drew the younger son to return home. And now, with his sweet sound the father tells the older son that everything that he has is his sons as well. There is always a feast in the house.

Jesus is telling this parable to them and to us this morning that He died and rose again so that He could make us God’s friends without any effort on our part. In fact, in that friendship our efforts will sometimes work against us. Sometimes we can be like the older brother, resenting God’s acceptance of others who don’t try as hard as we do.

God sends Jesus to us who are tempted to feel like older brothers, to us who are tempted to feel worthy of more and to resent those who fall short. He sends Him out to say, “I died and rose for you also. All the agony of my death was for you too. All the joy of my rising is for you too. You too are mine. You too are dearly loved.” Jesus says that to everyone of you. He covers you with the robe of righteousness. To show your sonship and the bond of His love, He put shoes on your feet and a ring on your finger. Yes, all the Father’s is ours! Amen!

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.