

Living the Word

MEDITATING ON THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Year C - 4th Sunday of Lent

A resource for personal, family and community prayer.



“...this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.”

Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

You are invited to read the Gospel passage attentively, respectfully and reverently as a gift of God.

¹The tax-collectors and the sinners, meanwhile, were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, ²and the Pharisees and the Scribes complained. “This man,” they said, “welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³So he spoke this parable to them: ¹¹“A man had two sons. ¹²The younger said to his father, ‘Let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.’ So the father divided the property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country, where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. ¹⁴When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, ¹⁵so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. ¹⁶And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating, but no one offered him anything.

¹⁷Then he came to his senses and said, ‘How many of my father’s servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will leave this place and go to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; ¹⁹I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants.’”

²⁰So he left the place and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He

ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly.

²¹Then his son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ ²²But the father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³Bring the calf we have been fattening and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, ²⁴because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵Now the elder son was in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. ²⁶Calling one of the servants, he asked what it was all about. ²⁷‘Your brother has come,’ replied the servant, ‘and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.’

²⁸He was angry then and refused to go in, and his Father came out to plead with him; ²⁹but he answered his father, ‘Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening.’

³¹The father said, ‘My son, you are with me always, and all I have is yours. ³²But it is only right that we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.’”

Background to Gospel passage

Where does it happen? Jesus and his disciples are en route to Jerusalem.

When does it happen? Jesus tells this parable in response to the Scribes and Pharisees who are scandalized that Jesus befriends sinners by eating and drinking with them.

Who is there? Tax collectors and sinners who are drawn to Jesus and who feel welcomed by him.

Scribes and Pharisees who believe that

God should have nothing to do with sinners.

What happens? The Scribes and the Pharisees are highly critical of the pastoral practice of Jesus – welcoming sinners and eating with them without any repentance on their part beforehand. Jesus responds by means of a parable by which he seeks to bring them to an understanding of the truth of God as a merciful Father, and the truth of themselves as self-righteous and lacking in real love.

Suggested Guidelines to help you recognise this passage in your life experience.

“Then he came to his senses.”

Can you enter into the experience of the younger son by remembering a time when you, or someone close to you, had lost everything, including self respect, and they humbly admitted that they needed to change their ways and seek help?

“He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly.”

Can you enter into the experience of ‘the father’ by remembering an occasion when

a loved-one who had become estranged, or who had messed up, came back into your life and your heart was moved with generous compassion, joy, mercy and love?

“He was angry then and refused to go in”.

Can you enter into the experience of the elder son by remembering a time when you felt great anger, resentment and frustration when, in spite of your best efforts and commitment, you saw someone else being celebrated and honoured in a way you felt they didn’t deserve?

What does this Gospel remind me of? *Where was it? When was it? Who was there? What happened?*

Now I can see that God’s loving presence and action were in that life experience.

Prayer Response - you are invited to respond in prayer in your own words.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for the times when I have experienced this Gospel in my life...

Heavenly Father, I am sorry for the times I have fallen short of living this Gospel...

Heavenly Father, please help me to live this Gospel...



You are invited to deepen this prayer experience by resting your heart silently in God's presence and love. The quiet repetition of a word or phrase from the passage may help you on this journey to stillness and silence.

An Invitation to Reflect

What new insight has the Gospel opened my eyes to see?

Action

This week I will try to live the Gospel by...

Thought for the week

“Mercy is greater than any mistake we make.”

Rest in this truth, hold it in prayer and trust that it will bear fruit in your life.

Children



Jesus encourages us to come to our senses right now and remember how much we are loved by God, the Father.

Jesus really wants us to know that we can return to God the Father's love because

He will always welcome us with open arms.

Can you think of a 'Jesus person', maybe a parent, grandparent or teacher, who helped you to experience how much you are loved by God, the Father?

Draw or write about this 'Jesus person' and how they helped you to see how much you are loved by God.



Father, I thank you for the gift of this story which calls me to wake up to Your never-ending love for me and to know that You will always welcome me with open arms.

Action: this week I will try to show love by...

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