



Time to PREP

- ♥ For Class
- ♥ For the Week
- ♥ For Yourself
- ♥ For Lent

WEEK #23 – March 21st, 22nd & 24th, 2022

Gospel for March 27th, 2022

4th Sunday of Lent

Luke 15:1-3,11-32

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So to them Jesus addressed this parable:

"A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father,

'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.'

So the father divided the property between them.

After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings

and set off to a distant country

where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.

When he had freely spent everything,

a severe famine struck that country,

and he found himself in dire need.

So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens

who sent him to his farm to tend the swine.

And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed,

but nobody gave him any.

Coming to his senses he thought,

'How many of my father's hired workers

have more than enough food to eat,

but here am I, dying from hunger.

I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him,

"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I no longer deserve to be called your son;

treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."

So he got up and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off,

his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion.

He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.

His son said to him,

'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you;

I no longer deserve to be called your son.'

But his father ordered his servants,

'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Take the fattened calf and slaughter it.

Then let us celebrate with a feast,

because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again;

he was lost, and has been found.'

Then the celebration began.

Now the older son had been out in the field

and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing.

He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean.

The servant said to him,

'Your brother has returned

and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

He became angry,

and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him.

He said to his father in reply,

'Look, all these years I served you

and not once did I disobey your orders;

yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends.

But when your son returns

who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'

He said to him,

'My son, you are here with me always;

everything I have is yours.

But now we must celebrate and rejoice,

because your brother was dead and has come to life again;

he was lost and has been found.'"

Background on the Gospel Reading

The parable Jesus tells in this week's Gospel is unique to the Gospel of Luke. Jesus has been teaching the crowds as he journeys to Jerusalem. As he teaches, the Pharisees and scribes complain and challenge Jesus because he is welcoming sinners at his table. Today we hear the third of three parables that Jesus tells in response to his critics. These three familiar parables—the lost sheep, the lost coin, and today's parable of the prodigal son—invite us to consider the depth of God's mercy and love.

The Pharisees taught a scrupulous observance of Jewish Law. In their interpretation and practice, observant Jews who shared table fellowship with sinners would be made unclean. Like Jesus, the Pharisees hoped to lead sinners back to God. The Pharisees, however, required that sinners first become ritually clean—observant of the Pharisees' interpretation of Jewish Law—before sharing table fellowship. This appears to be one of the major differences between the Pharisees and Jesus. Jesus reaches out to sinners while they are still sinners, inviting them to conversion through fellowship with him. Jesus is God acting among us; by befriending us, he is inviting us to return to friendship with God. Through friendship with Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we, in turn, bear fruit for God. Recall last Sunday's Gospel and the barren fig tree.

Our familiarity with this week's parable risks dulling us to its tremendously powerful message. We call this the parable of the lost son or the prodigal son. Any focus on the younger son, however, must also be balanced by an examination of the unusual behavior of the father.

First we must imagine our first response to the audacity of a son who asks for his inheritance before his father has died. Indignation would certainly be a justifiable response to such a request. Yet the father in this parable agrees to honor the son's request and divides his property among his two sons. How might we describe such a father? Foolish comes to mind, but so does trusting. Without property of his own, the father must rely upon his sons to provide for his well-being.



The younger son takes his inheritance and leaves home. The older son remains, continuing to provide for the father and the household. Having been disgraced by the younger son, the father spends some time watching the road for the return of the lost son. When he eventually sees his wayward son returning, the father not only welcomes him but also runs out to greet him and then honors him with a party. We say that this father is loving and forgiving. Yet these adjectives only begin to describe the depth of love and mercy that characterize the father.

We find no surprise in the anger of the older son. Yet the father appears sad and even confused by the older son's indignation. He says in reply that they should celebrate because the lost son had returned. The father is filled with gratitude and love for the older son's faithfulness. This love is in no way diminished by the father's rejoicing at the return of the younger son. Yet the older son's jealousy reveals his limited understanding of the depth of his father's love. The Fourth Sunday of Lent is traditionally called Laetare Sunday. Laetare is a Latin word that means "rejoice." Today's Gospel describes the reason for our joy: God's great love for us has been revealed in Jesus. Through his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, Christ has reconciled us with God and one another.

PLEASE PRAY FOR...



- ♥ Sister of Lucille Panos (Special Needs Catechist) who passed away.
- ♥ [Pray for God's peace and reconciliation to overcome all hatred, conflict, and war;](#)
- ♥ The well-being, health and happiness of PREP catechists, students and families;
- ♥ Pray for all, especially those suffering and struggling silently.