

**BIBLE STUDY**  
**March 25, 2019**

**THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT**

**Joshua 5: 9a, 10-12**

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

**2 Corinthians 5: 17-21**

**1. Joshua 5: 9a, 10-12**

- The first reading continues the story of Salvation History
- The Israelites have crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land.
- The crossing of the Jordan resembled the crossing of the Red Sea.
- The priests stood in the Jordan carrying the Ark of the Covenant. The waters of the Jordan stopped flowing and the people passed through on dry land.
- This reading represents a new period of Israel's history. The wandering in the desert has ceased. They inhabit the Promised Land. It is the fulfillment of God's promise.
- v5: The Lord announces that the period of the Egyptian enslavement is at an end. This is new chapter in their history. A new beginning
- They celebrate Passover-the remembrance of the crossing of the Red Sea-to inaugurate their possession of the Promised Land.
- There is a conscious parallel between the Exodus and the entrance into the Promised Land. The Exodus is a paradigmatic event. All other experiences find their meaning in the Exodus event.
- They ate of the produce of the land: a thanksgiving feast. The land is truly theirs. They are living off of it.
- The manna ceased: they no longer have need of the food of their wanderings in the desert. They grew their own food because they were no longer wanderers but inhabitants.

**2. Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32**

- Chapter 15: The preface (verses 1-3) says that Jesus told these parables to teach the Pharisees why he welcomes sinners and eats with them. He does so because that is how God is. It is what God does.
- Three parables of finding lost things and persons: lost sheep, lost coin, and lost sons.
- Prodigal Son: spends extravagantly and recklessly. The Father is also prodigal. He gives out his love and mercy extravagantly and recklessly!
- The younger son: demands inheritance effectively saying he wants his father to be dead
- Leaves home: highly unusual and very dangerous in those times. You never travelled or went off on your own. You existed within the family. You moved as <sup>a unit</sup> ~~only~~. Never alone. That he went off alone meant that he was up to no good.
- Spends money quickly and ends up in dire straits

- Humiliating and demeaning for a Jew to be feeding pigs.
- He comes to his senses: he hits rock bottom. Sometimes the only way a person changes.
- He will return to father and ask that he be treated as a hired hand. He rehearses his speech.
- Father sees son at a distance. It means that his father has been waiting for him.
- The father runs to him. This is a violation of protocol in that culture. The father should have waited for the son to come to him. Others would have interpreted this as the father's loss of dignity and self-respect.
- Son does not even have a chance to finish his rehearsed speech. The father is calling for a robe, a ring, and sandals. He is re-instating him to his former relationship in the family.
- He orders the fattened calf to be killed for a feast to celebrate that his lost son was dead but has come to life again; was lost but now is found.
- The older son hears the celebration as he returns from working in the fields. He is angry when he learns that his father has welcomed his younger brother back with such celebration. He refuses to enter the house and the party.
- The father comes out to him. Again, the father will do anything to save his sons. The older brother complains bitterly that he has "served" his father all these years. He has never "disobeyed his orders." Yet, he has never gotten a reward like his younger brother—"your son"—who squandered all the money "with prostitutes."
- The father says: You are here with me always; everything I have is yours."
- The older brother is like the Pharisees who cannot find joy to welcome the sinners back into the fold as Jesus did. They want to see them punished. They seem to have served God not with joy but with grudging obedience as a duty and obligation. They want to get "paid back" for what they have done.
- The father answers reminding them that they are in relationship with him and possess everything he has. Not about pay back but about love.
- The parable may give comfort and hope to those who have wandered away and squandered God's gifts. They are assured of a merciful and compassionate welcome.
- The real intent of the parable is to point out to all "the older brothers" out there that they are invited to share the joy of God when a sinner returns not withdraw in anger and condemnation.
- If you were to see a person in heaven whom you had judged and condemned in your mind, would you throw your arms around them and say, 'I am so glad you made it!' or 'how did you get in here?'
- Who is really the lost brother?

### 3. 2 Corinthians 5: 17-21

- The death and resurrection of Christ has changed everything. We no longer view others as in the flesh (v 16) but as a new creation.
- The old has passed away, new things have come
- This all comes from God who has reconciled himself to us through Christ
- He has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation—we are to be bearers of God's mercy, forgiveness, and love. We are to be reconcilers not dividers.
- We are ambassadors for Christ—God appealing through us
- Be reconciled with God
- Christ who did not know sin was made sin so that we become the righteousness of God in him.
- Righteousness= justified by God. Made to be in right relationship with God through no merit of our own but totally through the mercy and love of God in Christ