

March 31, 2019 Fourth Sunday of Lent

Father, guide us to reconciliation!

Joshua 5:9a, 10-12

Psalm 34:2-7

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:1-3,11-32

The Israelites celebrated the Passover and the manna they had been receiving ceased to appear after that day. However, they now had the rich harvests of the land of Canaan.

The psalmist is always praising and blessing the Lord because when he sought the Lord his prayers were always answered. He invites us to glorify the Lord as he does so that we too will be radiant with joy. The lowly who call out will be heard and saved from all distress.

In the second reading Paul reminds us that as brothers and sisters in Christ we are new creations. The old has passed away and new things have come from God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ. We are to act as ambassadors for Christ as if God were appealing through us. Jesus calls us to be partners in the ministry of reconciliation and we are sent into the world with a simple message: Be reconciled!



In the Gospel Jesus tells the parable of the Prodigal son who requested his share of his father's estate and eventually squanders it. He ends up with a job of feeding swine before "coming to his senses." Upon his return his father is overjoyed and initiates a celebration, which is resented by his older, faithful brother. The father is happy because his son "has come back to life."

**Father, you call us to return
To you through your Son
For reconciliation with the Holy Spirit.**

Change

Regardless of where we are in life the psalmist reminds us that if we look to the Lord we too can change and become radiant with joy. As Paul says, this is part of being a new creation in Christ. The father, acting as an ambassador for God, was overjoyed when his young and wayward son returned with a repentant heart.

Change is often a disturbing factor but it is essential in life; after all any plant or animal that does not change is dead. The prodigal son experienced a change of heart and his father proclaimed joyfully that he who was dead has come to life, he who was lost is found. The son came to see that his real home is a place of peace, a haven for well being, and he was willing to return not as son but as servant. He could never expect his arrival would make the place come to life as the father had the fatted calf killed and the usual work day was replaced with music and dancing. There was also a change in the older brother who resented such a welcoming for one who squandered so much of the family resources.

But our heavenly Father is a God of love and love is the most powerful energy on earth. The prodigal son found his way to it; the brother would eventually come around to it, and the father exemplified it from the beginning. Love has a purpose and a power that his world must succumb to and it wills itself to be held high and refuses to be held back by the superficialities of the world. It carries burdens without them being burdensome.

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