

Lent 4—Sunday, March 31

Joshua 5:9-12

⁹The Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” And so that place is called Gilgal to this day. ¹⁰While the Israelites were encamped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. ¹¹On the day after the pass-

over, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. ¹²The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Psalm 32

¹Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

²Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

³While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”, and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

⁶Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the

rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.

⁷You are a hiding-place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

⁸I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;

I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

⁹Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.

¹⁰Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

¹¹Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ¹⁸All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;

¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.

²⁰So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

¹Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable:

¹¹"There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' ²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he

ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. ²⁵"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. ²⁹But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' ³¹Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

Questions

Overall Lent Questions:

Before you read today, check yourself -

1. How do you feel about Lent?/How are feeling about this Lenten season?
2. How do you feel walking with Jesus on his journey through this time of his suffering, betrayal, and death? How do you feel walking with those around you on your Lenten journey?
3. What do you want from Jesus this Lent? Be specific.
4. What do you think Jesus wants for/from you during Lent?

Entering the Text:

1. What word/phrase stands out to you?
2. What do these texts say about who God is?
3. What do these texts say about who we are?
4. What do these texts say about our relationship - or lack thereof - with God?
5. What good news do you hear

Digging Deeper:

1. How do these readings connect with your/our past readings/discussion throughout this Lenten season?
2. As followers of Jesus, we claim that God's forgiveness is for us, and for all people, regardless of our sin. How easy do you find it to accept that gift of God's forgiveness for yourself? What inhibits you from accepting God's forgiveness?
3. Have you ever felt unworthy to be called God's son/daughter? What has/does that feel like? What gives you hope that you are freed and forgiven?
4. How have you experienced God's forgiveness?
5. Put yourself before Jesus Christ on the cross. Let your sin pass before you, and consider the weight of your sin. As you gaze upon Christ's face:
6. How do you feel about seeing Christ hanging on the cross?
7. What do you ask of him?

Prayer of the Week:

Father God, as the prodigal son experienced the depth of his father's love, let me feel how deep and wide your love is for me. And also like him, let me feel shame, even to the point of tears, for my careless and deliberate sins. I confess these sins to you, and beg your forgiveness, though I do not deserve it. Grant me the joy of seeing you, the God of the Universe, running towards me, wrapping me in your loving embrace, and smothering me in your promise of forgiveness. In Jesus' name, whose blood has cleansed and freed me, I pray. Amen