



The call to repentance continues this week. Although the focus shifts just a little bit, to themes of forgiveness and reconciliation. Often these aspects of the spiritual life are viewed primarily from an individualist perspective. This week's readings, however, bring together the individual and the communal. Our reconciliation with God leads us into the "ministry of reconciliation". Our forgiveness brings wholeness, not just to ourselves, but to others through us. This connection between the "me" and the "we" is such an important theme of the Gospel, and a good place to linger in this week's worship, while also looking at the implications of the practice of forgiveness for justice in our world.

May you and your community know this forgiveness and reconciliation in this Lenten season.

## INTRODUCTIONS

*For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines*

**Joshua 5:9-12**: The Israelites celebrate the Passover, as God proclaims that the "disgrace of Egypt" is removed from them, and have their first meal in Canaan. The day after that the manna stops arriving.

**Psalms 32**: A celebration of the joy and healing that confession brings, and the restoration that God offers those who admit their sin. God's promise to instruct and guide those who trust in God.

**2 Corinthians 5:16-21**: In Christ we are reconciled to God, and we are called to invite others into this reconciliation – both between people and God, and between people and people.

**Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32**: Jesus' parable of the loving and forgiving father who welcomes back his wasteful and repentant son, and seeks to reconcile him with his resentful elder brother.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

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[http://bible.oremus.org/?show\\_adj=no&passages=Joshua%205:%209-12%20%0Acw%20Psalm%2032%0A2%20Corinthians%205:%2016-21%0ALuke%2015:%201-3,%2011b-32](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Joshua%205:%209-12%20%0Acw%20Psalm%2032%0A2%20Corinthians%205:%2016-21%0ALuke%2015:%201-3,%2011b-32)

### COLLECTS OF THE DAY

#### Collect One

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God,  
that we, who for our evil deeds  
do worthily deserve to be punished,  
by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

#### Collect Two

Lord God  
whose blessed Son our Saviour  
gave his back to the smiters  
and did not hide his face from shame:  
Give us grace to endure the sufferings of this present time  
with sure confidence in the glory that shall be revealed;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

and/or

God of compassion,  
whose Son Jesus Christ, the child of Mary,  
shared the life of a home in Nazareth,  
and on the cross drew the whole human family to himself:  
Strengthen us in our daily living  
that in joy and in sorrow  
we may know the power of your presence  
to bind together and to heal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Presider or deacon*

Let us offer prayers to God who has made us a new creation in Christ.

*Deacon or other leader*

For the holy catholic church throughout the world, sharing the death and resurrection of Christ.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For *N* our bishop, for presbyters and deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.

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**Lord, have mercy.**

For all the peoples of the earth and for their leaders.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For all who are sick, afflicted, or oppressed.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the dying and the dead.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For our families, friends, and companions, and for all those we love.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Remembering Saint *N*, and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Blessed are you, God of the Israelites, who gives your people food and drink. Receive the prayers we offer this day and invite us to the feast of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

In this season of desert pilgrimage, let us call to mind the prophet's vision: If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,

**The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your need in parched places, and make your bones strong. [Isaiah 58:10a, 11a]**

Let us pray. Holy God, whose loving kindness is everlasting: Lift the burden of all who are weary from the search for food and refresh those who are parched from thirst. Lord, in mercy,

**As you sent manna in days of old, grant living bread in our wilderness.**

O God, source of all consolation: Comfort with the sure sense of your presence all who feel forsaken, whose hope is dried up. Lord, in mercy,

**As you sent manna in days of old, grant living bread in our wilderness.**

Lord Jesus, who cried out in thirst upon the cross: open our ears to all cries of affliction, and through us provide food and drink. Lord, in mercy,

**As you sent manna in days of old, grant living bread in our wilderness.**

God our creator, who makes our bones strong: through our prayers and gifts heal the ravages of poverty and disease, that those now suffering may one day leap for joy. Lord, in mercy,

**As you sent manna in days of old, grant living bread in our wilderness.**

Merciful God, you ask us to cleanse our hearts, to loose the bonds of oppression, and to repair the ancient ruins. Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, that we might pour

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ourselves out for the hungry and offer refreshment to those who thirst. In the name of Jesus we pray;

**Amen.**

### POST COMMUNION

Father,  
through your goodness  
we are refreshed through your Son  
in word and sacrament.  
May our faith be so strengthened and guarded  
that we may witness to your eternal love  
by our words and in our lives.  
Grant this for Jesus' sake, our Lord.

and/or

Loving God,  
as a mother feeds her children at the breast,  
you feed us in this sacrament with spiritual food and drink.  
Help us who have tasted your goodness  
to grow in grace within the household of faith;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### PRAYERS

God of wilderness and water,  
your Son was baptised and tempted as we are.  
Guide us through this season,  
that we may not avoid struggle,  
but open ourselves to blessing,  
through the cleansing depths of repentance  
and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit. Amen.  
Artist of souls,  
you sculpted a people for yourself  
out of the rocks of wilderness and fasting.  
Help us as we take up your invitation to prayer and simplicity,  
that the discipline of these forty days  
may sharpen our hunger for the feast of your holy friendship,  
and whet our thirst for the living water you offer  
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

God of the covenant,  
in the glory of the cross  
your Son embraced the power of death  
and broke its hold over your people.  
In this time of repentance,  
draw all people to yourself,  
that we who confess Jesus as Lord  
may put aside the deeds of death

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and accept the life of your kingdom. Amen.

God of the living,  
through baptism we pass from the shadow of death  
to the light of the resurrection.  
Remain with us and give us hope  
that, rejoicing in the gift of the Spirit  
who gives life to our mortal flesh,  
we may be clothed with the garment of immortality,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

My brothers and sisters:  
reconciled to God by the mercy of Christ,  
we pray with confidence for the needs of the church and the world.

### *Intercessions*

Through Christ you make us a new creation, O God,  
for with him we pass from sin to the new life of grace.  
Accept our prayers in the warm embrace of your compassion,  
and welcome all people to the festive banquet of your table,  
where we may rejoice in your love  
and celebrate the inheritance you have given to us.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of patient love,  
you await the return of the wayward and wandering  
and eagerly embrace them in pardon.  
Through baptism you have clothed us with the glory of Christ  
and restored our inheritance:  
give us generous hearts  
to welcome all who seek a place  
at the table of your unconditional love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eternal lover of our wayward race,  
we praise you for your ever-open door.  
You open your arms to accept us  
even before we turn to meet your welcome; you invite us to forgiveness even before our  
hearts are softened to repentance.  
Hold before us the image of our humanity made new, that we may live in Jesus Christ, the  
model and the pioneer of your new creation. Amen.

## LECTIONARY NOTES

### **REFLECTIONS ON THEME:**

The theme this week stands out very clearly in these readings – God removes disgrace; God forgives and restores; the prodigal is welcomed home and reconciled to his family; God reconciles us to God's Self, and to each other, and we are called to do the same. Forgiveness flows from God's infinite and unconditional grace, and is received through honest confession and repentance. But reconciliation with God, as much as it brings personal healing and restoration, is not only personal. It is also social, drawing us back

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into reconciliation with others, and into passing on to others the healing and grace we have received.

### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

**GLOBAL APPLICATION:** Forgiveness and reconciliation are a global necessity, but are, unfortunately, a very scarce resource. Denial, projection, deflecting blame, and covering up appear to be the strategies of our age – in governments, in corporations, and even in the Church. The inevitable consequence of this is that those who are victimised and damaged, are generally left to bear their pain alone, with no hope of restitution, and no acknowledgement, apology or offer of help from those who have inflicted their suffering on them. We have seen this during the economic meltdown; we have seen it in third world countries, where exploitation by wealthy nations have left these countries bare of resources, and in deep debt (Haiti is a good example of this); we have seen it in the Church, where victims of abuse have been silenced or accused to protect the institution. As long as this remains the practice in our world, we will remain broken, and we will continue to break ourselves and others. Now is the time to proclaim that forgiveness is possible, is necessary and is the way to healing for us all. How can we call our world to honest confession, true, practical repentance, and into the life-giving way of forgiveness received and shared?

**LOCAL APPLICATION:** Our churches and communities are ripped apart by anger, hatred, vengeance and deceit. We know that when people live together – whether in a town or in a household – there will be disagreements, differences of belief and culture, and hurt inflicted on one another, whether intentional or not. We also know that maintaining the cycle of pain through broken relationships, grudges, judgment and paybacks only brings greater suffering. Jesus has offered us both the principle and the role model – in his teaching and in his actions Jesus demonstrated the healing and restoration that comes when we forgive and reconcile. It is a shame that we find it so hard to live this teaching out. But, if we, as followers of Christ can't learn to admit our sin, repent of wrong action, and reconcile with those we have hurt – or have hurt us – what hope is there for the world?

### **SERMON OUTLINE**

#### **Lk 15:1-3,11-32 a man who had 2 sons...**

the familiar story of the prodigal & elder sons - & the unfailing love of their father - looked at from a different angle... What about mum? Not mentioned in story – was she alive or dead?

**1. Her Family:** - hard-working husband & their 2 sons on farm

**2. Her Husband:-** life of hard work on the farm – one day would leave it to his sons in 3 shares – double to the older & one to younger.... Imagine his sorrow when the younger said he was leaving & asked for his share of the inheritance... Imagine he discussion with the mother.... Imagine her sorrow...

**3. Her Older Son:-** hard-working & conscientious – *working v29 like a slave all these years – never disobeyed a command...*

**4. Her Younger Son:-** outgoing & adventurous – with flighty ideas about life – got his share of the inheritance & *travelled to a distant country 13 & squandered his property in dissolute living*

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**Think of the mother....** staying at home – woman’s place! Imagine her turmoil – trying to persuade her son not to go... saying to her husband – “go out & see if he’s coming home” All this is conjecture.. What is not questionable is the joy of the father as he sees his son returning - & *filled with compassion he ran & put his arms around him v20 & kissed him – party time!*

Such is the imagery Jesus paints of the joy in heaven there is *over 1 sinner who repents & returns to his heavenly Father in penitence & faith... May we in faith echo the words of the prodigal son:- I will get up & go to my father (18) & I will say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven & before you - the prayer of every penitent sinner...*

*By Norman Porteous*

### ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

["Which Comes First: Grace or Repentance?"](#) the Rev. Dr. Robert Dunham, *Day 1*  
Perhaps no Scripture text has logged more pulpit time in our culture than this wonderful parable. It is a storehouse of sin and redemption, of grace and the refusal of grace, and one can read it from several different perspectives--the father, the prodigal, the older brother. Over the years, preachers have tried all sorts of approaches to unpack its riches. I read once of one who gave a sixteen-week sermon series on the Prodigal Son; after the sixteenth sermon a woman greeted the pastor at the door of the church and said, "I'm so sorry that poor boy ever ran away from home."<sup>[1]</sup>  
[http://day1.org/1759-which\\_comes\\_first\\_grace\\_or\\_repentance](http://day1.org/1759-which_comes_first_grace_or_repentance)

["There's a Party Goin' On 'Round Here,"](#) the Rev. Sarah Shelton, *Day 1*  
The Pharisees and scribes were grumbling about the social activities of Jesus. They said of him, "This man receives sinners and eats with them!"(15:1-2) Their insinuation is that if Jesus is a party boy, then what kind of Savior could he possibly be?

We might expect Jesus to back off and say, "But, I will redeem these whores and tax collectors with whom I party! I will make them straighten up, be more responsible, appear more middle-class like you and me." But, instead, he tells them three stories in which it is unquestionably clear that God loves to party with sinners. Jesus tells one story after another with hardly a pause for breath in between. He begins with a party where a woman finds a lost coin from her wedding dowry. He progresses to a bash thrown after finding a lost sheep. And then he tells of the biggest, most questionable blowout of all, the party for the prodigal son. (William Willimon, "When God's Story is Your Story," *Pulpit Resource*, March 26, 1995)

[http://day1.org/1034-theres\\_a\\_party\\_goin\\_on\\_round\\_here](http://day1.org/1034-theres_a_party_goin_on_round_here)

["Is There Joy in God's House?"](#) the Rev. Dr. Thomas G. Long, *Day 1*  
A long, long time ago when I was a little boy in Sunday school and Sunday schools began with an assembly-you know, a gathering of all the children before we would divide into our separate classes-one of the things we would do every assembly was to sing Sunday school songs:

"Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world."  
"Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he."

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Songs like that. Almost every Sunday we would close the assembly time by singing the same song, something of a going-into-church song. The song was, "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.' I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'"

[http://day1.org/471-is\\_there\\_joy\\_in\\_gods\\_house](http://day1.org/471-is_there_joy_in_gods_house)

["Arriving Where We Started,"](#) Pastor Nathan Mattox, First United Methodist Church of Morris, Oklahoma.

The parable of the prodigal is related to John Wesley's concept of grace. The author also draws on Andrew Marr, a Benedictine, and TS Eliot - worth reading in itself... let alone as a sermon source.

<http://morrisokumc.blogspot.co.uk/2007/03/march-18-sermon-arriving-where-we.html#2492489617316738328>

### CHILDREN

["Wearing His Brand,"](#)

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/branded.html>

["The Lost Sheep,"](#)

[http://www.sermons4kids.com/lost\\_sheep.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/lost_sheep.htm)

["Three Wishes,"](#)

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/prodigal-son.html>

["Missing!"](#) Linda Edwards, The Children's Chapel.

<http://childrenschapel.org/biblestories/missing.html>

["The Prodigal Son,"](#) Linda Edwards, The Children's Chapel.

<http://childrenschapel.org/biblestories/prodson.html>

["A Father Welcomes a Lost Son,"](#)

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/lent4les.htm>

["Jesus Carries the Lots Sheep Home on His Shoulders,"](#)

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/pen15les.htm>

### HYMN RECOMMENDATIONS

[Amazing Grace](#)

[And Can It Be](#)

[Saviour Thy Dying Love](#)

[Grace Greater Than Our Sin](#)

[Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Your Grace Is Enough](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Grace Like Rain \(Amazing Grace\)](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)



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[Amazing Love \(My Lord, What Love Is This?\)](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Amazing Love \(You Are My King\)](#) (*Link to YouTube video*)

[Prodigal](#) (*Not so much a hymn as a song that could work for a special musical item or anthem*)