

I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants.” So he left the place and went back to his father.

‘While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.” And they began to celebrate.

‘Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. “Your brother has come” replied the servant “and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.” He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, “Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening.”

‘The father said, “My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.” ’

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT / C

27 MARCH 2022

GRACIOUSNESS AND MERCY

After many years in the desert journeying towards the land of promise, it must have been difficult for the people of Israel to comprehend that they had finally arrived. A new stage in their lives was beginning and it was fitting to rejoice and remember what God had done by celebrating the Passover. The God who had nourished them in the desert would no longer provide manna; it was no longer necessary since now they had their own land which had been provided by God’s graciousness.

For Paul, God’s graciousness and mercy were nowhere more apparent than in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In the second letter to the Corinthians, much of chapters two to six are taken up by Paul sharing his understanding and experience of apostolic life with them. There had been considerable friction between Paul and the community and this, no doubt, had called Paul to reflect on the sort of reconciliation and harmony for which he longed and worked. Misunderstood and hurt, Paul looks to the heart of the gospel message, a message of a new creation through forgiveness. As Jesus had reconciled us to God by his own death, so we are called to be reconciled to one another.

The call to reconciliation and graciousness is continued in today’s Gospel. The timeless beauty of the parable of the loving father and his two sons calls us to look to our own hearts. Are we ready to forgive and be forgiven? Will we share in the new creation that Jesus died to bring us?

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Josh 5:9-12

A reading from the book of Joshua

The people of God went to the promised land and there kept the passover.

The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Today I have taken the shame of Egypt away from you.’

The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening in the plain of Jericho. On the morrow of the Passover they tasted the produce of that country, unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn, that same day. From that time, from their first eating of the produce of that country, the manna stopped falling. And having manna no longer, the Israelites fed from that year onwards on what the land of Canaan yielded.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 33:2-7. R. v. 9

R. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

1. I will bless the Lord at all times, / his praise always on my lips; / in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. / The humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**
2. Glorify the Lord with me. / Together let us praise his name. / I sought the Lord and he answered me; / from all my terrors he set me free. **R.**
3. Look towards him and be radiant; / let your faces not be abashed. / This poor man called; the Lord heard him / and rescued him from all his distress. **R.**

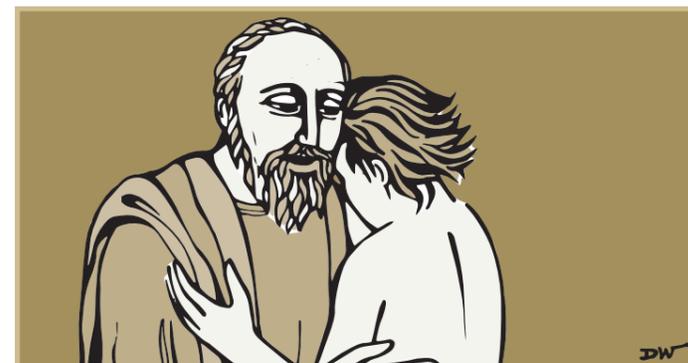
SECOND READING

2 Cor 5:17-21

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

God reconciled us to himself through Christ.

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God’s work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on his reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men’s faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ’s name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made



the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

■ The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Lk 15:18

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
I will rise and go to my father and tell him:
Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL

Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Your brother here was dead and has come to life.

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. ‘This man’ they said ‘welcomes sinners and eats with them.’ So he spoke this parable to them:

‘A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, “Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.” So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

‘When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, “How many of my father’s paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father,