

The Fourth Sunday in Lent March 27, 2022

We meet two kinds of people in today's Gospel lesson,. One kind is represented by the tax collectors and sinners. The other kind is represented by the Pharisees and the scribes. One group loves Jesus and his message of forgiveness. The other group resents Jesus' mercy and grace.

The church has struggled with this same tension down through the ages. Some love the Lord's message of sin and grace; Law and Gospel. And some glory in self-righteousness. There will be only one kind of person in heaven: repentant sinners! Those who believe that they are better and more righteous than others and resent the fact that Jesus welcomes sinners are going to be greatly disappointed.

Today Your Mercy Calls Us

Lutheran Service Book 915, Lutheran Worship 347, The Lutheran Hymnal 279



1 To - day Your mer - cy calls us To wash a - way our sin.
2 To - day Your gate is o - pen, And all who en - ter in
3 To - day our Fa - ther calls us; His Ho - ly Spir - it waits;
4 O all - em - brac - ing Mer - cy, O ev - er - o - pen Door,



How - ev - er great our tres - pass, What - ev - er we have been,
Shall find a Fa - ther's wel - come And par - don for their sin.
His bless - ed an - gels gath - er A - round the heav'n - ly gates.
What should we do with - out You When heart and eye run o'er?



How - ev - er long from mer - cy Our hearts have turned a - way,
The past shall be for - got - ten, A pres - ent joy be giv'n,
No ques - tion will be asked us How of - ten we have come;
When all things seem a - gainst us, To drive us to de - spair,



Your pre - cious blood can wash us And make us clean to - day.
A fu - ture grace be prom - ised, A glo - rious crown in heav'n.
Al - though we oft have wan - dered, It is our Fa - ther's home.
We know one gate is o - pen, One ear will hear our prayer.

L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

L If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

C God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

(*Luke 18:13*)

L Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

Introit Psalm 51:2–6; antiphon Psalm 51:1

L Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

C Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

L For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

C Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

L Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.

C Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

C Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

L Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

L Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

C Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and we praise You for Your glory.

L Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:

C Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

L Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive our prayer.

C For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect of the Day

L Let us pray: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Isaiah 12:1–6

¹You will say in that day:

“I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

²“Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.”

³With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴And you will say in that day:
“Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵“Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.

⁶Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hebrews 12:2

L O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

C the founder and perfecter of our faith,

L who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

C and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Psalms 32

L ¹Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

C ²Blessèd is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

- L** ³For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- C** ⁴**For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**
- L** ⁵I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.
- C** ⁶**Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.**
- L** ⁷You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
- C** ⁸**I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**
- L** ⁹Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.
- C** ¹⁰**Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.**
- L** ¹¹Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
C **and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!**

2 Corinthians 5:16–21

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore 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.

- L** This is the Word of the Lord.
- C** Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Luke 15:22a, 24a

- L** The father said to his servants,
- C** "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Luke 15:1–3a, 11–32

- L** The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 15th chapter.
- C** Glory to You, O Lord.

¹Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear [Jesus]. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable: . . .

¹¹"There was a man who had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in 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 into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise 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 as one of your

hired servants.””²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.’²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

²⁵“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.’³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

and sits at the right hand of God the Father
Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

God Loved the World So That He Gave

Lutheran Service Book 571, Lutheran Worship 352, The Lutheran Hymnal 245



1	God	loved	the	world	so	that	He	gave	His	on - ly	
2	Christ	Je -	sus	is	the	ground	of	faith,	Who	was	made
3	God	would	not	have	the	sin -	ner	die;	His	Son	with
4	Be	of	good	cheer,	for	God's	own	Son	For -	gives	all



Son	the	lost	to	save,	That	all	who	would	in
flesh	and	suf -	fered	death;	All	then	who	trust	in
sav -	ing	grace	is	nigh;	His	Spir -	it	in	the
sins	which	you	have	done;	And,	jus -	ti -	fied	by



Him be - lieve Should ev - er - last - ing life re - ceive.
Him a - lone Are built on this chief cor - ner - stone.
Word de - clares How we in Christ are heav - en's heirs.
Je - sus' blood, Your Bap - tism grants the high - est good.

5 If you are sick, if death is near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death;
That is the firmest ground of faith.

6 Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To You, O blessèd Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!

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Devotional Thoughts:

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is one of the most cherished and well-known of Jesus' parables. It is the third of three parables recorded in Luke 15. Jesus told it in response to a complaint by the Pharisees and the scribes, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

He first told them The Parable of the Lost Sheep. Then He told them The Parable of the Lost Coin. In keeping with this sequence, some translations like to call Jesus' third story The Parable of the Lost Son.

This is an equally appropriate name for this parable in light of the concluding words spoken by the prodigal son's father: "It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (verse 32).

The first two parables focus on the determined and unrelenting efforts of the searchers. The sheep was lost because it simply wandered away. There was no willful intention involved in its becoming lost. The coin was lost through no fault of its own. Both were sought out and found by caring searchers. Both resulted in joy! Jesus makes that clear for us.

When the sheep is found, the shepherd calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Jesus then adds, "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

When the coin is found, the woman calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Jesus explains, "I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

But some may ask, "What about the willful sinner?" "Aren't there some people who have so much disrespect for God that they deserve to be lost?" In answer to these unspoken questions, Jesus told the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

This son is rude and disrespectful to his father. By asking for his inheritance, he implies that his father has not died quickly enough to suit him. Beyond that, he took his inheritance and squandered it in reckless living. In verse 30, we learn that the older brother is well aware of the kind of reckless living the prodigal son was engaged in.

Finally, his narcissistic, live-for-today attitude caught up with him. He is reduced to slopping hogs. Worse than that, the pigs are eating better than he is!

His bottom-of-the-barrel circumstance brings him to his senses and repentance. He knows that he has thrown away any claim to sonship. A simple job in his father's employment would be immeasurably better than what he is now experiencing.

But wait. Isn't this prodigal son experiencing exactly what he deserved? That is the attitude of the older brother. And guess what. The older brother is right! He was experiencing exactly what he deserved! This is the beauty of the parable!

Tax collectors and sinners do not deserve to sit down and eat with the Son of God! No one does. We all have gone astray, every one of us! But there is one more unexplainable element in this story! It is the love of the father!

The scribes and Pharisees could not begin to grasp the mystery of God's mercy and grace. After all, they had deceived themselves into believing that it was unnecessary for them.

The thrill and joy of the father at finding his lost son are overwhelming. He must have suspected that his son had died but no, he is alive again!

He quickly clothed his prodigal son with the best robe! He put a ring on his finger and shoes on his bare feet! He killed the fatted calf and had a party with music and dancing!

Jesus never tells us how the prodigal son felt at this reunion. He doesn't have to. Each one of us can imagine for ourselves the wonder and joy in this boy's heart. I can picture him rubbing his eyes in disbelief.

King David understood the happiness of the prodigal son. He wrote Psalms 51 and 32 in response to being welcomed back into God's family following his dreadful sins. Both psalms are appointed for our use this week.

He begins Psalm 32 with these words, "Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." He ends it with these, "Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!"

I don't know at what level you have experienced this joy of God's mercy and grace. I know a man whose youth mirrored that of the Prodigal Son. As he told me his story, I was reminded of the movie Animal House. But God was gracious and merciful to him, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

I didn't know him in his prodigal years but I knew him as a changed man. Although he was physically strong, he was gentle and kind. He did everything in his power to avoid repeating the sins of his youth. This is how the forgiving love of our Heavenly Father changes human hearts. I am certain that there was joy in heaven when he returned to the Lord his God!

Maybe that has happened to you. If it has, I know that unlike the older brother and the scribes and Pharisees, you are thrilled and overjoyed to welcome back one sinner who repents.

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Have mercy on us, O God, according to Your steadfast love. Give us a proper knowledge of the evil we have done in Your sight, move us to confess our offenses against You, and grant us forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake.

C Amen.

L Father in heaven, You welcome us into Your family for the sake of Your Son. Call us to repentance when we wander from Your ways or believe we have earned a place in Your household by our works, and return us to the confident joy that in Christ alone we are found and alive.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, govern the kingdoms of this world according to Your holy and gracious will. Protect those in harm's way because of the war in Ukraine, especially the innocent men, women, and children. Curb what is evil and promote what is good among us wherever we live in this fallen world.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. We thank You for the protection granted to all who have attended to our needs during this pandemic. Thank You that are experiencing a continuing decline in the number of new infections and an

ease of restrictions. Continue to strengthen all those who serve us in the medical field. Give Your comfort and peace to all who are suffering from this illness or others. Be with those who mourn. Grant to them the hope and assurance of a blessed reunion in heaven.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

On My Heart Imprint Your Image

Lutheran Service Book 422, Lutheran Worship 100, The Lutheran Hymnal 179



On my heart im - print Your im - age, Bless - ed Je - sus, King of grace,



That life's rich-es, cares, and plea-sures Nev - er may Your work e-rase;



Let the clear in - scrip-tion be: Je - sus, cru - ci - fied for me,



Is my life, my hope's foun - da - tion, And my glo - ry and sal - va - tion!

Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 28 – April 2, 2022

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you mediate on what God has done for you.

Monday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 15:22a, 24a

- L** The father said to his servants,
- C** "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Introit Psalm 51:2–6; antiphon Psalm 51:1

- L** Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
- C** Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!
- L** For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
- C** Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.
- L** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
and in sin did my mother conceive me.
- C** Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being,
and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.
- C** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
- L** Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.

Kyrie

L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Christ,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.

Our introit introduces us to the unifying theme of our lessons. The words from Psalm 51 were written by King David as the superscription indicates: "A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba."

Nathan, as God's messenger, confronted David with his sin and pronounced God's judgment upon him. David responded to Nathan with these words, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan then said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die" (2 Samuel 12:12-13). Rejoicing in God's forgiveness, David wrote Psalm 51.

The theme for this week is God's forgiveness for people who are irredeemably mired in sin. Psalm 51:3-4 says, "I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment."

David thought that he had covered up his sin but he hadn't. God was fully aware of it. David, too, was fully aware of his sin. He had only deceived himself into believing that he had gotten away with adultery and murder. Looking back on it, he realized that his sin was always before him. It continually nagged at his soul.

In Psalm 32:3-4, David described it this way: "For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer."

You may have also experienced the distress of sin in your life. It's possible that something has bothered you that only you and God are aware of. When we confess our sins, we receive God's full and free forgiveness. David explains it with these words, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin!" (Psalm 51:2).

When this happens, joy and relief overwhelm us. We may not be able to express it as eloquently as David did in the psalms but it is there nevertheless. In Psalm 51:7-8, he writes, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice."

Prayer: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. Amen. (Psalm 51:10-12)

Tuesday

L	In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
G	Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 15:22a, 24a

L	The father said to his servants,
G	"This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Kyrie

L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Christ,	C	Have Mercy on us.
L	O Lord,	C	Have Mercy on us.

L Let us pray: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

There are many lessons to be learned from the Parable of the Prodigal Son. However, as you read the parable, the most important thing to remember is the reason Jesus told the story. Jesus told the Parable of the Prodigal Son because the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” They grumbled and complained because Jesus was merciful and gracious to sinners.

The Pharisees and the scribes couldn’t understand it. In their quest for personal righteousness, they had developed a haughty and arrogant attitude toward anyone who did not meet their standards.

Through the years, I’ve noticed that we all have the same tendency. We want to set standards for righteousness that we can achieve. We are only ready to grant clemency for infractions when we find ourselves guilty of falling short.

Many years ago, I attended a meeting of leaders in our congregation. A prominent elder was given the responsibility for the opening devotions. He spent his time chiding everyone for their lack of commitment to faithful church attendance. In his opinion, anything less than perfect church attendance should disqualify a person from a leadership position. So you can imagine my surprise when this very same elder was not in church the following Sunday!

He excused himself from Sunday worship because he attended an out-of-state wedding on Saturday. Apparently, he believed that his excuse for being absent from worship was valid but not the explanations given by others.

One of the reasons we are so unwilling to forgive others is the blindness we have to our own sin. But God is never blind to our sin. It may take some time but when we finally recognize that we are slopping pigs in a faraway land, God is ready to mercifully receive us back into His family.

When we are aware of God’s mercy and grace in our lives, we are more than willing to extend mercy and grace to others. This is why Jesus teaches us to pray, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Let us pray: Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 15:22a, 24a

L The father said to his servants,

C “This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

Psalm 32

- L** ¹Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.
- C** ²**Blessèd is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**
- L** ³For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- C** ⁴**For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**
- L** ⁵I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.
- C** ⁶**Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.**
- L** ⁷You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
- C** ⁸**I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**
- L** ⁹Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.
- C** ¹⁰**Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.**
- L** ¹¹Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
- C** **and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!**

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |

The first and last verses of Psalm 32 by King David summarize two aspects of Jesus' Parable of the Prodigal Son: "Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." And "Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" Forgiveness is a great blessing and leads to great joy!

But I can't read Psalm 32 without recalling something that happened early in my ministry. As you may know, the second half of Psalm 32:5 was spoken responsively by the pastor and congregation every Sunday as part of the page 5 and page 15 liturgies in the Lutheran Hymnal. A service similar to those is Divine Service setting 3 in the Lutheran Service Book on page 184. In it, you will find:

P: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,
C: and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

One day during confirmation instruction, a young man asked me why I was angry with the congregation every Sunday morning. I was totally amazed that he would think such a thing and so I asked him what he meant. He replied, every Sunday you say, "I SAID, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord."

If you know me, you know that I might be a little overly animated at times while I conduct the service on Sunday morning. Apparently, this boy's mother would frequently display her disappointment in his failure to follow instructions by saying, "I SAID" (rather loudly), and then she would repeat her previous directions. When he heard me begin with, "I SAID", he interpreted my words as anger.

Nothing could be farther from my intention. David wrote this verse because he was so astounded that God granted him forgiveness simply because he confessed! God required no penance beyond the admission of guilt. His verbal confession moved God to forgive his iniquity!

From then until now, when I speak that portion of the liturgy, I remember the day that I was misunderstood. This verse is a great proclamation of the Gospel and an example of God's mercy and grace. I want people to

think of God's love for David and all of us when I speak these words from Psalm 32:5. I don't want them to believe that I am angry with them ;-)

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for hearing us when we confess our transgressions and forgiving the iniquity of our sins. Grant us joy and gladness in the gift of your mercy and grace through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 15:22a, 24a

L The father said to his servants,

C "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Isaiah 12:1–6

¹You will say in that day:

"I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

²"Behold, God is my salvation;

I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation."

³With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴And you will say in that day:

"Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵"Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;

let this be made known in all the earth.

⁶Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

Isaiah begins chapter 12 with these words, "You will say in that day." Which day is that day? We can discover the answer by reading chapter 11:

^{11:1} There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

² And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

When this shoot comes from the stump of Jesse, Isaiah tells us in verse 6:

⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.

Isaiah was seeing the day when the Savior would come and all of God's promises would be fulfilled in Christ. This is the day when:

"I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me".

This is the day when we will "Sing praises to the LORD" with shouts of joy! We live in that time now by faith. We live under God's grace and forgiveness. When Jesus returns, we will live in eternity in the time when Isaiah's prophecies will be fully realized. The lamb and lion will lie down with each other and all our tears will be wiped away!

Let us pray: O Lord God, thank You for the gift of Your only-begotten Son, our Savior, the Shoot from the stump of Jesse. Grant that the Holy Spirit who rests upon Him would also give to us the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Amen.

Friday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Luke 15:22a, 24a

L The father said to his servants,
C "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

Kyrie

L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.

2 Corinthians 5:16–21

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to

himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore 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.

When was the last time you made a mistake? (Or should I say, “When is the last time you sinned?”). Aren’t you old enough to know better by now? I recently read an article that said Christians must gradually get better and better. We must slowly be transformed from being sinners into saints. While this is a noble goal, is it possible?

I have traveled around the sun on this planet more times than I like to remember. I have given up some sins of my youth. My language is better. I can find some people that seem to be more sinful than I appear but I haven’t come close to ending sin in my life. Sin is like a Whac-A-Mole arcade game. As quickly as one sin is suppressed another one pops up. Although I’ve been a Christian for as long as I can remember, I’m no closer to being free from sin now than I ever was. This is so depressing. It might lead me to ask, “Am I really a Christian?” “Am I really saved?”

The Apostle Paul had the same problem. He wrote, “For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (Romans 7:18-19).

Paul answers this problem over and over again in his writings. One of the clearest and most comforting places is found in the last verse of our Epistle lesson: “For our sake he [God the Father] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.

In this world, I will continually be like Paul. I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. This is why Jesus came. Although I’m a sinner, God sees me as being righteous for Jesus’ sake.

The message of Christianity is not that we must get better and better and finally become saints. No, we become saints because Jesus became sin for us! This is what it means to be justified by grace through faith for Christ’s sake.

Glory Be to Jesus

Lutheran Service Book 433, Lutheran Worship 98, The Lutheran Hymnal 158



1 Glo - ry be to Je - sus, Who in bit - ter pains
2 Grace and life e - ter - nal In that blood I find;
3 Blest through end - less a - ges Be the pre - cious stream
4 A - bel's blood for ven - geance Plead - ed to the skies;



Poured for me the life - blood From His sa - cred veins!
Blest be His com - pas - sion, In - fi - nite - ly kind!
Which from end - less tor - ment Did the world re - deem!
But the blood of Je - sus For our par - don cries.

5 Oft as earth exulting
Wafts its praise on high,
Angel hosts rejoicing
Make their glad reply.

6 Lift we, then, our voices,
Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious blood!

Saturday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Gradual Hebrews 12:2

L O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
C the founder and perfecter of our faith,
L who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,
C and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Verse of the Day: Luke 15:22a, 24a

L The father said to his servants,
C “This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

Kyrie

L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.

2 Corinthians 5:16–19

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

This wasn't meant to be a tribute to Jesus' words, "So the last will be first, and the first last," but it turned out that way. We considered the last verse of our Epistle lesson yesterday. Today, let's look at the first portion.

In verse 17, Paul writes, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." We are "in Christ" by faith because He reconciled us to Himself!

We often think of the word "reconciled" as becoming friends again. Sometimes friends or family will have a falling out. Maybe they won't speak to each other for years. But hopefully, the alienation will come to an end and they will become friends again. They will be reconciled. We have become friends again with Christ! But there is more than that to the Greek word for reconciled.

Notice that reconciled is used as an action word! Jesus reconciled us to Himself! He is the actor and we are the object of His action—He reconciled us.

The Greek word for reconciled implies a change. When Jesus reconciles us, He changes us! It isn't that Jesus has changed and now accepts sin. No, He told the woman caught in adultery to "go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Rather, we are changed. He has raised us up to Himself. He became sin for us so that we would become righteous! We are reconciled to Jesus because He took our sins away. He no longer counts our sin against us! Without sin, we are holy and blameless in His sight. We are changed. We are a "new creation!"

As new people, we live new lives. We seek to serve God and our neighbors in love. We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of reconciliation. Grant us strength to place our old sinful lives behind us and live as the new creations that Jesus has made us. Move us to share the message of reconciliation with the people that You have placed in our lives. Grant that we may also be reconciled to one another through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

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