

## 4th Sunday Lent C 10

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May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

In Christ there is new creation. Today's readings are about renewal and reconciliation and restoration. For us as forgiven children of God, it begins and ends in Christ, living as ambassadors of this new creation.

Just prior to our OT reading, God appoints Joshua as the leader of the people after Moses died. Then instructs the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan River and stand in the middle of the river. At that point river dries up so all the peoples could walk across the dry river bed into the Promised Land. God on this day fulfills the promise made to Abraham and to each his descendants to give them the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey.

In the verses preceding our reading the people once again renew their covenant with God. With the agreement complete God declares 'your disgrace had been removed and you have been restored to the covenant I made with your ancestors.' Now the promise has been fulfilled, now you are to claim the land, eat and share in its bounty, to live according to my commandments becoming ambassadors of my grace to the world.

The people of Israel have been renewed in their mission, reconciled to their God, their sins forgiven and restored so they may live as a beacon for all the world to see. God blesses them so they might share the abundance they have

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received so that all of creation might be blessed. The Israelites were renewed in their covenant with God and given the opportunity to live a new creation.

For the people of Israel left the land generations before, they were held in slavery and rescued by God only later they rebelled against God destined to wonder in the desert for 40 years. Yet God remained with them, watching and waiting for this day to arrive when they would be welcomed home and restored to their proper place.

There is no greater welcoming home story anywhere than the one we have in our Gospel lesson for today. The hard part about the Parable of the Lost Son or the Prodigal son is that it is so well known is that you know it so well. As such many of you think you know what it means, you know the moral of the story and you connect with the lost son in so many ways. But hopefully I can jolt you into hearing it differently, of putting your preconceived ideas aside so you might somehow connect with the father or the elder son as well.

A wealthy man who worked hard over the years to build up his business had two sons. He was both generous and demanding as he was hard working but fair in his dealings. His sons could both do no wrong and little right. While he gave them whatever they wanted, he wanted them to be responsible and know what it means to work hard.

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Then there was the younger son, understanding his older brother was going to get the lions share of the business and most likely one day he would be out on his own. So he decided it was time to explore and find himself. So he demands his share of the business now and the father gives in. Cashing out the assets the young man sets off to hike across Europe, travel the 7 seas and enjoy the finer things in life while he can truly enjoy them.

It all went along just fine until the funds ran out. Friends he found along the way disappeared and one day he woke up alone, without a place to stay, no money and no job. Oh, it was fun while it lasted, it just did not last long enough. The only work he could find was not enough to even purchase food for the day, little lone a place to rest or provide any comfort for him. As he lay across a park bench in the middle of the night, he realizes that while his dad was a task master, he was bighearted and even the hired men had a bed to sleep in and 3 square meals each day. That very moment he got up determined to find his way home, to apologize and seek forgiveness from his father and ask for a job in the business.

Meanwhile back home the father awakens, feeling something has changed.

Each day as he arose he stared out the upstairs window straining to see as far down the road as he could hoping to see that old familiar stride of his long lost son. All that day his eyes kept glancing out the window. Then late in the

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day, just as dusk was about to set in, his eyes spied something in the distance. Was it true, was it him. The young man was still far down the road but the father knew it was him. Out the door he raced, sprinting down the road as fast as his old legs would carry him. Followed closely by a couple of the hired men who knew something was wrong, as they had never seen him run anywhere before.

The father throws his arms around his son, almost not able to believe that this day had finally arrived. This son who was lost was found, this one who was dead was truly alive. Turning to the men following him the father quickly tells them to quickly get a fresh set of clothes, new shoes and the best jacket, to inform the cook to prepare a feast for a celebration was to take place this night.

In all the excitement no one remembered to inform the older brother of the events that were taking place. So as he arrive home from the office he wondered what was going on. There were cars everywhere, a tent in the back yard, music blaring and a barbeque was underway. As he parks his car, he hears the news. His brother has returned and their father is throwing the biggest bash anyone could remember in a long time.

He cannot believe it. His little brother comes home after all he did and is welcomed like a rock star. He storms back out to the garage and is about to

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speed away when the father comes in excited about the return of the younger son and is confronted by his first born. “Dad, what are you doing?” he shouts at his father. “That son of yours comes home penniless after disappearing for years, squandering the inheritance you gave him and you welcome him like this.” I know what is cost you to give him his inheritance, I worked hard for you to build up the business again, I stayed here and did the responsible thing and you reward him with a party.

The father saddened by the response of his older son replies. “you have been here with me. All of this is yours and that is not going to change. But your brother has returned, our family restored so I had to celebrate. What else could I do, for he was lost and now has been found, he was dead and now look he is alive.”

The father is reconciled with his son and works to bring about reconciliation between the bothers. In the mean time he celebrates the restoration of the family and is renewed in his spirit for a new day as begun, a new creation has taken place.

Paul in Corinthians is reminding the people and us that our God has already brought about reconciliation for us and restored us to our position within his family. Even though we have returned unfit and unworthy of this reconciliation God our Father has already done so. Now we have been

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entrusted to continue the ministry of reconciliation within this new creation in which we now live.

For when we were not worthy Christ died for us, he took our sin upon himself so we would not have to bear it on our own. On that day the promise of salvation was fulfilled for us. Born in the waters of baptism, we left to wonder in the desert only to return to the promised land by the power of God, where we have been welcomed home. Here we have been renewed, reconciled and restored as ambassadors for Christ. Now we are called to live out the ministry of reconciliation so all may come to know the saving grace we have received. For in Christ there is new creation.

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

*Pastor Michael*