

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT  
MARCH 27, 2022

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA



PRELUDE

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*  
Setting: Chuck Marohnic

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN (Stand) #686

*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

- 1 **Come, Thou Fount of ev'ry blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.  
While the hope of endless glory  
Fills my heart with joy and love,  
Teach me ever to adore Thee;  
May I still Thy goodness prove.**
  
- 2 **Here I raise my Ebenezer,  
Hither by Thy help I've come;  
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure,  
Safely to arrive at home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger,  
Wand'ring from the fold of God;  
He, to rescue me from danger,  
Interposed His precious blood.**
  
- 3 **Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be;  
Let that grace now like a fetter  
Bind my wand'ring heart to Thee:  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;  
Prone to leave the God I love.  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.**
  
- 4 **Oh, that day when freed from sinning,  
I shall see Thy lovely face;  
Clothed then in the blood-washed linen,  
How I'll sing Thy wondrous grace!  
Come, my Lord, no longer tarry;  
Take my ransom'd soul away;  
Send Thine angels soon to carry  
Me to realms of endless day.**

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS*

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

**Amen.**

Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
**who made heaven and earth.**

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

*(We kneel and observe a time reflection)*

O almighty God, merciful Father,

**I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

*INTROIT (Stand)*

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**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

*KYRIE*

**Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

*HYMN OF PRAISE (omitted during Lent)*

*THE PRAYER OF THE DAY*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

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.**



THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON (Be seated)

Isaiah 12:1-6

You 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.

"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."

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And 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.

"Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be made known in all the earth.  
Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 32 (Read responsively)

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

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

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.

I 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.

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.

You are a hiding place for me;

you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.  
Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
or it will not stay near you.

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!

**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.**

*SECOND LESSON*

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

From 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. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*GOSPEL VERSE (Stand)*

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

*GOSPEL*

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter

**Glory to You, O Lord.**

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

So he told them this parable: . . .

"There was a man who had two sons. And 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. Not 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. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to

be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

“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! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’ 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. 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.’ 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. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 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.’ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 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. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ.**

#### *SERMON*

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

I’ll just tell you very honestly: I find preaching on this text to be intimidating. I suppose that’s because the story Jesus gives here is so beautiful and so powerful and so clear that I don’t feel much more needs to be said. And I certainly don’t want to get in the way of its messages.

But having said this, I also realize that a few clarifications or reactions to the text on my part might be helpful to you. So with that in mind, let me share a few.

One of the things I’ve noticed about sermons on this text is that they often address the subject of how to best name or label the parable. The most common label, as you probably know, is the Parable of the Prodigal Son. This name comes from the younger son’s squandering of the inheritance. The translation we read today said that this squandering was done through “reckless living,” but another way of saying this is that the son lived “prodigally” – a word connoting excess.

I was curious about how our label of “prodigal” became so well-known, and I thought maybe it came from the old King James Version. But the phrase there is “riotous living.” I even went back to the old Latin Vulgate because the word prodigal comes from a Latin root. But the vulgate says “luxuriose” – from where we get our word luxury, of course. At that point I ended my search. Perhaps one of you knows the history of the usage.

Regardless of its history, the Prodigal Son label is certainly appropriate. And especially in one sense. It’s appropriate because it describes the main dilemma here – the question of what to do with prodigals. Remember, the parable gets told by Jesus in response to a complaint by Pharisees and scribes that Jesus was eating with sinners – those who were prodigals.

That being said, the label leaves out the fact that this parable also speaks strongly to the older brothers of the world – those who supposedly aren’t lost in sin and who find it unpalatable that prodigal sinners are

welcomed back to the family. Jesus, according to verse three of this chapter, specifically told the parable to “them” – meaning those who were complaining.

For this reason, many suggest that the parable is best labelled The Parable of the Two Sons. This label emphasizes that Jesus’ message is for both prodigals and the righteous.

At the same time, this label is still insufficient. It’s insufficient because it leaves out one of the most important teachings of the parable – that of the nature of God.

The parable’s most shocking aspects, and therefore its most powerful teachings, regard the behavior of the father who here represents God. The father acts shockingly in two ways.

First, he hands over the son’s inheritance without so much as a warning. Scholars mostly agree that handing over the inheritance before the father’s death was not unheard of, but they also mostly agree that it was seen as bad form – even to the point of being shameful. It was insulting for a son to ask for it and reckless of a father to give it – especially without some kind of safeguard or plan in place. In that culture, even more than ours, this situation between father and son described by Jesus has trouble written all over it. And yet, the father gives. With no strings attached.

And then, when the son acts prodigally and loses the inheritance, the whole situation becomes dominated by shame. The shame is so great that the expected reaction of the father is to disown his son – definitely in public, but probably also in private.

And yet, what does this father do? He ignores the expectations of others, completely disregards his pride, and runs out to welcome back his prodigal son. Wow!

By the way, that detail of running, I’m told, is especially shocking in this story. No head of the household was to show that kind of emotion or make that kind of effort. But this father did.

And here Jesus gives us an amazing picture of how God our father loves his children. God’s love is emotional, enduring and far beyond expectation – characterized by great generosity and merciful forgiveness. This love is wondrous – as we will note when we sing the next hymn.

For this reason, some have suggested that the best name for the parable is The Parable of the Prodigal Father – since it teaches us about a prodigal God. Here again we have a good name, but one that still can’t do justice to the whole story. For our God may be generous and extravagant in his giving, but does he give in excess? And is his giving wasteful? No. Perhaps it may seem that way at times. But God gives according to his wisdom also. And his wisdom is beyond our understanding. God may be prodigal in a way. But not in all ways.

All that being said, at the end of the day it really doesn’t matter what name or label we give to this parable. What’s important is that we hear it. And let it move us.

So, let’s think a bit about how it should move us.

First of all, it should move us as sinners. It should remind us that we have been – and continue to be – prodigal sons and daughters of God. All of us.

We’re prodigals because we take what God our Father gives us and waste it. We’re prodigals because we too often pursue our own pleasure and excitement when we should be pursuing the goals of God’s kingdom instead.

What’s more, we’ve all said to God “I prefer my timing not yours.” And we’ve all chosen at times to leave our Father and his family and go our own way.

As prodigals, we eventually realize that our sin puts us in a place of need. We may not see it right away since famine may not come as quickly as it did to the son in the parable. But we will see it eventually. We cannot live in unrepentant sin for long.

Once we realize our need, we will find that there is only one good course forward – that of returning to our Father and asking for mercy. Jesus, in the parable, shows us this course. And he even gives us words to say: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”

When we do this, in sincerity and truth, our Father will run to us and extend his loving embrace. He may even do this before we get our confession out, as happened in the parable. He will forgive us, provide for us and celebrate us. He will put his robe of righteousness around us. He will restore our status as his child with the ring of his baptismal promise. He will place the shoes of Gospel peace upon us so that we may stand firm and ready. Our shame will be gone. Our sin will be forgotten. No longer will we be lost.

And yet, this is not all we are to take from the parable. The parable should move us also to extend mercy to others. And to rejoice when a sinner repents.

Yes, we are all prodigal children of God. But when we live with the Father we are also saved and redeemed children of God. And in accordance with our salvation, we know the blessing of staying close to the Father and following his ways.

God is pleased with us when we live this way. But God also loves those who don't. They are his children too. God wants the best for them – and always welcomes them when they return home.

We who have kept faith must therefore never resent our God's enduring love for his wayward children. We must, instead, work with him in encouraging faith and right living for all people and celebrate when the faithless and sinful return.

Like Jesus, we too must eat with sinners – not condoning their sin but reminding them of God's enduring love and our common condition as people in need of a Savior. And, like the father in the story, we must learn to ignore the expectations of others, disregard our pride, and run to welcome back the prodigals of the world.

This is not easy work. It will tear at our hearts, put us at risk, and most likely prove costly to us in certain ways. But it is the way we are called to live. And the way God will bless in the end.

Our God has a heart for the lost. And this is good news for all of us.

Let us then, as his people, live with that kind of heart too. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

*HYMN OF THE DAY (Stand) #543*

*What Wondrous Love Is This*

- 1 What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!  
What wondrous love is this  
That caused the Lord of bliss  
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,  
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul!**
  
- 2 When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,  
When I was sinking down, sinking down,  
When I was sinking down  
Beneath God's righteous frown,  
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul, for my soul,  
Christ laid aside His crown for my soul.**

- 3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing;  
To God and to the Lamb I will sing;  
To God and to the Lamb,  
Who is the great I AM,  
While millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,  
While millions join the theme, I will sing.
- 4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on;  
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on.  
And when from death I'm free,  
I'll sing His love for me,  
And through eternity I'll sing on, I'll sing on,  
And through eternity I'll sing on.

#### APOSTLES' CREED

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

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 and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

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.

#### OFFERING

*Offerings support the church's mission work – both here and through our many partners. Offerings may be placed in the box at the sanctuary entrance or sent to the church through our website or the mail. Fellowship Cards help us welcome new people and track participation. Please fill one out and place it in the offering box following the service.*

#### PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH (Kneel)

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 forgive us by Your holy absolution. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father in heaven, You welcome us into Your family for the sake of Your Son. Bless us in our family life together as your church, that we might appreciate one another, live according to your ways, and reflect your heart for the lost. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We thank You, Lord God Almighty, that You have made Your deeds known among us. Bless pastors, teachers, musicians and all church workers in their daily labors, that they would faithfully and effectively remind us of your deeds and lead us in making them known among all the peoples. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, we are brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin. Make us ever grateful that in Holy Baptism You forgive and enliven even the smallest child, and that for Jesus' sake You wash us thoroughly from our iniquity and cleanse us from our sin. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, in Christ You reconcile the world to Yourself. Bless our nation and all the nations of the world – guiding the hands of all whom You have placed in authority. Give them wisdom and prudence, that Your people might live in peace and freely make known the message of reconciliation. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, hear our prayers for all who cry out to You for mercy, healing and help, including those on our prayer list and those we remember before you at this time... Deliver them according to Your will and, as You have made them a new creation in Christ, keep them mindful of the day when sorrow and sickness will be no more. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, great in our midst is the Holy One of Israel, who visits us this day with His body and blood! Give to all who partake of your holy communion penitent hearts which properly receive Christ Jesus as their strength and salvation. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**



*THE LITURGY OF HOLY COMMUNION*

*PREFACE TO HOLY COMMUNION*

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The Lord be with you.

**And with thy spirit.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up unto the Lord.**

Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God.

**It is meet and right so to do.**

It is truly good right and salutary...evermore praising You and saying:

*SANCTUS*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth;**

**heav'n and earth are full of Thy glory.**

**Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.**

*THE LORD'S PRAYER*

**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.**

*THE WORDS OF OUR LORD*

*PAX DOMINI*

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**Amen.**

*AGNUS DEI*

**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.**

**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.**

**O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace. Amen.**

*DISTRIBUTION (Be seated)*

*The Communion Assistant will come forward to receive first, then those from the pulpit side – by order of pew, front to back. Communicants will come up the center aisle and return via the side aisle. When all from the pulpit side have communed, the baptismal font side will commune in the same manner. We ask that the wine be consumed away from the tray table. Empty cups should be dropped into the receptacles.*

*COMMUNION MUSIC*

*What Wondrous Love Is This*

Setting: Keith Kolander

*NUNC DIMITTIS*

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**Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word,  
for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people,  
a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.  
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

*POST-COMMUNION COLLECT (Stand)*

*BENEDICTION*

*SENDING HYMN #433*

*Glory Be to Jesus*

- 1 Glory be to Jesus,  
Who in bitter pains  
Poured for me the lifeblood  
From His sacred veins!**
- 2 Grace and life eternal  
In that blood I find;  
Blest be His compassion,  
Infinitely kind!**
- 3 Blest through endless ages  
Be the precious stream  
Which from endless torment  
Did the world redeem!**
- 4 Abel's blood for vengeance  
Pleaded to the skies;  
But the blood of Jesus  
For our pardon 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!**

*ANNOUNCEMENTS (Be seated)*

*DISMISSAL*

*POSTLUDE*

*Glory Be to Jesus*  
Setting: Aaron Jansen

Those serving:

Sunday, March 20, 8:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Bob Juenger  
Comm. assist: Jim Easterly  
Reader: Anne Kauzlarich

10:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Michael Chamberlain  
Comm. assist: Judy Koucky  
Reader: Grace Chamberlain

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