



# Church of the Epiphany

## FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP

Lent 4 • Cloudcroft, New Mexico • March 30, 2025



### Collect for Lent 4

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

### Readings for Lent 4

Joshua 4:9-14, 5:1, 9-12

Psalm 34:1-8

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:11-32

Our gospel reading today is the parable of the Prodigal Son. This is the second most popular of the Jesus parables. (The first is the parable of the forgiven servant who refused to forgive the small loan to a fellow servant) So, it is surprising to discover that from previous years of liturgical progress of the early church to the near present this parable was ignored and was overlooked for many years. It was only in the Book of Common Prayer of 1928 that it found its place in the lectionary.

In the Gospel of Luke chapter 15 we have three parables on lost possessions. The first is the lost sheep, one of one hundred that the shepherd goes out to find with celebration. The second lost item is the lost coin, one of ten. When it is found the woman calls in her neighbors to rejoice with her on the recovery. The third is the parable of the Prodigal. Here it is just one individual who is lost.

Jesus is narrowing down the value of each and the celebrations of God when the lost is recovered and the value of each is redeemed by a loving God.

This parable is the longest of all the parables and consists of three scenes. First is the confrontation of the youngest son with his father and his request for his inheritance and his subsequent departure to wasteful spending of all his wealth and his pitiful return. The second scene is of the joyful homecoming and the restoration of the son back alive. The final part is the confrontation of the second son with the father and his rejection of the celebration of the return of the lost brother.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, this story has so many threads. We are shocked at the behavior of the young son and his dealing with this father. Then we rejoice with his coming to himself and his return home. Then we have the loving father trying to console his older son to the return of what was lost and now is found.

Certainly, there are parallels in our lives to this parable of family troubles. All our decisions may not have been the best at times but our loving heavenly Father must have rejoiced as the Spirit guides us in a new and faithful direction.

We give you thanks for your love.

Amen

The parable of the lost Son begins as Jesus says, "A certain man had two sons." The majority of this third parable is about the younger of two sons, but the older brother is clearly an important subject at the end.

The astonishing request of the younger one to his father is shocking especially to the crowd of Jewish listeners. This request for his inheritance now was unheard of. Only with the death of the father would there have been any discussion of the division of the estate. It was Jewish Law, that the first-born son was to inherit two thirds of the estate and the young one a third. Taking over running a large estate was job that required experience and understanding of the complex character of the job. Therefore, the older son was the one upon whom this responsibility fell. The younger son had his role to play but it was under the control of his brother. Here in this story the younger one rejects this role and is determined to ask an astonishing request. "Give me my money now and I will be out of your life." Surprisingly the father does as his son asks and gives him his allotted portion. As the father relinquishes the money, this son manages to spend it all in high living and loose moral adventures in a far country.

Famine and mismanagement reduce the son to poverty and the only job he can find is as a hired worker in a pig farm. He is reduced to total need. To be in want was a new experience for him as he reflected on the position of a servant at

his father's home.

In this miserable condition he "comes to himself" and he considers his fate. I will go home and confess my sin against God in heaven and my father and ask to be just a servant in my father's house. He even rehearses this confession and takes off for home. This parable may be a favorite in that we too may have at times come to ourselves and taken off for home with God. And the result may have been to open our hearts to a loving God who will clean us up and restore our life.

When he drew near home his father who has been watching for him sees him at a distance and the old man runs to greet him. This was also a response that would have shocked the Jewish listeners to this story. It was not considered dignified to run and give a hug and a kiss. The lost son began his repentance speech but it was cut short by the overflowing love of the father.

The father was only concerned with the return of a lost son. Bring a robe, sandals, a ring and prepare a banquet. The one lost sheep and the one lost coin were no match for the lost son's return. There is some concern from past thinkers as to the worthiness of the returning son's repentance. If you want an interesting look at that prospect read the poem by Rudyard Kipling, called The Prodigal Son. You can bring it up on the internet and get a different opinion.

The joyful homecoming that the older son hears about from a servant when he returns from a days work on the estate upsets him. The news does not sit well and he refuses to go and join the festive reunion. In his anger, he overlooked the security of his life with his father and the gracious living it afforded him. Jesus may have been pointing out to the religious leadership their anger at the welcome Jesus made to tax collectors and sinners who came to him for God's blessing and failed to understand the loving heart of God.

In the parable the focus now is on the father. The words are directed to his older son to bring him back from the from the "distant country"

he had quickly run to. The older son was not willing to listen to **"Your brother has come home."**

### **Rejoice!**

The parable leaves two themes in tension. First, Jesus illustrates the love of God that is beyond human love as commonly understood and practiced. No typical father would have behaved as the one in the story. Second this parable is addressed to the critics of Jesus who found his message and preaching ministry contrary to the established Temple authority. These critics are illustrated by the behavior of the elder son who simply cannot join the rejoicing over the lost being found.

The two themes stand on their own independence of one another. Jesus came to show some are worthy of this love and some are not as seen in the contrast between the two sons. But they do have in common something at a deeper level. Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God. His message was about God whose love surpassed all typical expressions of love in humanity. That love is available to all who will open their hearts to the Gospel message of God's Son Jesus. This love of God is not in line with those who think they know the true nature of God. The congregation at worship is the place for celebrating the home coming each week of the prodigal son. It is all of us and the joy of driving away the thoughts of unrighteousness we experience in our lives.

We can make the same mistake by our actions to drive each of us into the **"distant country."** And once it happens it can be a difficult effort to return home.

Paul expressed this thought in his Letter to the Romans, "Welcome one another, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."

A parable to remember.

Amen.

Pastor Fred

### **Prayer List - 3/30/25**

St. Paul's Anglican Church, Owasso, OK  
Fr. Chris Waters

Bishop Steven and Tricia

### **Those who need your healing care and strength:**

Juan  
Denise Seif  
Walter and Carolyn Ford  
David and Jessie Brinkley  
Elijah Nix  
Luis and Kelle Senge  
Ellie  
Rev. Shelby Moon  
Esther & Joel Fyock, Lydia Tran  
Rev. Elias Rosales Mendes  
The Camacho family  
The Cozart family

### **Those in the Armed Forces:**

Dominick Rankin, US Army, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Gabriella Murley, Ft. Bliss, TX  
Mason Gregg, Camp Courtney, Okinawa  
Creed Napier, US Air Force,  
J.W. Grove, US Navy  
Nicholas Tran, Joint Base Lewis-McChord  
Shawn Zima, Hong Kong  
Wyatt Green, US Navy  
Emma Skidmore, US Navy, OCS

### **We pray for our Epiphany family:**

Donya Conine; Trevor Conine; Wayne Jr.  
and the children; Carol Greb,  
Kelli; Harry Duval  
Larry and Jennifer Williams, Jessica  
and James  
Bob and Shirley Williamson

**Lessons for Lent 4**  
**March 30, 2025**  
Anglican Lectionary  
year C

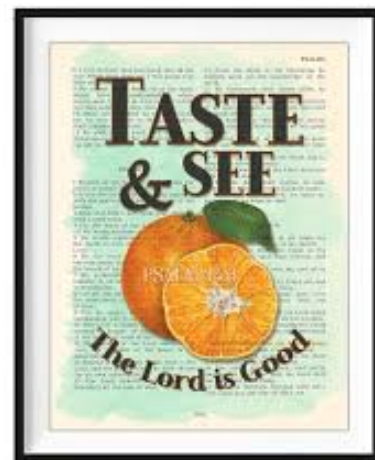
**Old Testament Reading**  
**Joshua 4:19-24. 5:1:9-12**

**19** The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. **20** And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. **21** And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?' **22** then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' **23** For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, **24** so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever."

**5/1** As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel. **9** And the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. **10** While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho. **11** And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. **12** And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

**Psalms 34:1-8**

- 1 I will always give thanks unto the LORD; \*  
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
- 2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; \*  
the humble shall hear this and be glad.
- 3 O praise the LORD with me, \*  
and let us magnify his Name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me; \*  
he delivered me out of all my fears.
- 5 They looked unto him, and were made glad, \*  
and their faces were not ashamed.
- 6 Look, the poor man cries, and the LORD hears  
him, \*  
and saves him out of all his troubles.
- 7 The angel of the LORD camps round about  
those who  
fear him, \*  
and delivers them in time of need.
- 8 O taste and see how gracious the LORD is; \*  
blessed is the one who trusts in him.



## New Testament Reading

### 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

**17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **18** All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; **19** 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. **20** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. **21** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God

## The Holy Gospel

### Luke 15:11-32

**11** And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. **12** 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. **13** 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. **14** And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. **16** And 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! **18** I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. **19** I 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.'"

