

Today's gospel has been called "the best short story in the world's literature." Allow the story of the prodigal son draw you into God's loving forgiveness.



This is one of the best known stories of the bible or indeed of literature. We wonder who it is really about.

Is it about the son who went away, repented and came back, just to be home, ready to eat humble pie and he got the fatted calf? The father, who welcomed him after he had spent all the family money and greeted him with bear hugs on his return? The elder son who had enough sense to get upset at the return of the brother but not enough love to join in the homecoming? The mother who is not mentioned but is there, probably in tears that the youngster is back safe? There were onlookers who probably thought he would get his comeuppance and were amazed but delighted at the forgiveness. Or the onlookers who said, 'sure he'll be off soon again, he was never any good'?

This was the sort of story Jesus loved. He probably had people in mind whom he knew as he told the story. Like the people who watch local plays, the hearers could have known who he was talking about!

We know who he is talking about! He's talking about you and me. Who do you or I identify with in the story? No matter which it is, - the father of welcome, the son who strayed and came back, the elder full of resentment, the mother of joy, the onlooker who rejoiced or the cynical one who could not believe the celebrations. No matter which, the eye of Jesus will look on each of us with love, companionship and forgiveness.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those, or try to forgive those, or pray for those who sin against us.

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NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

All bow for following three lines: and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world. Through Christ our Lord.

AFTER THE CONSECRATION

The mystery of faith. Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

You must rejoice, my son, for your brother was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.

were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.' Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus!

GOSPEL Luke 15:1-3. 11-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

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

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

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

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

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

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

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Have mercy on us, O Lord. For we have sinned against you. Show us, O Lord, your mercy. And grant us your salvation. May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.



OPENING PRAYER

O God, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come. Through our Lord Jesus Christ,

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING Joshua 5: 9-12

A reading from the book of Joshua

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

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

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 33: 2-7

R. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

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



SECOND READING 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

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

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