

Fourth Sunday of Lent



Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

20 Jesus said: ‘While the younger son 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. **21** Then his son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ **22** 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. **23** Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, **24**

because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

25 ‘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. **26** Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. **27** ‘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.’ **28** He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; **29** 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. **30** 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.’

31 ‘The father said, ‘My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. **32** But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.’”

Other readings: Joshua 5:9-12 Psalm 33 (34) 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

The first few lines of the parable of the Prodigal Son are omitted here for reasons of space. We focus more deliberately on the father and the elder son. The father welcomes back the return of his younger son with great extravagance. Nothing is too much to offer. Such is God’s delight at the return of a sinner.

The contrasting attitude of the elder son is the main message of the parable, which is told for those who contest Jesus’ welcoming attitude to sinners (15:1-3). Perhaps the elder son has a reasonable grievance. Did the father never show gratitude to him for his commitment, his ‘slaving’? The words of the father to this elder son are truly healing words: ‘My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours.’

Do I have a welcoming attitude to those who seek God after going astray?

Would I, like the elder son, refuse to go in?

We pray for generous appreciation of the commitment of others.

We pray that we may have the humility to change our ways.

