

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Use some or all of this reflection to help guide your personal journey through this week of Lent.

Reflect

Something about the reading from Luke this week is so familiar to so many people it is easy to dismiss it. Yet, it holds so much for us to reflect upon, to wonder at, to bring who we are to it, and then, let go and accept the gracious loving invitation from God.

From Richard Rohr:

Grace is not something God gives; grace is who God *is*. Grace is God's official job description. *Grace is what God does to keep alive—forever—all things that God has created in love*. If we are to believe the primary witnesses—the prophets, the mystics, the saints, the transformed people—an unexplainable goodness is at work in the universe. (Some of us call this phenomenon God, but that word isn't necessary. In fact, sometimes it gets in the way of the experience, because too many have named God something other than Grace).

There's no way that the Scriptures, rightly understood, present God as an eternal torturer. Yet many Christians seem to believe this, and many are held back from trusting God's goodness because of this 'angry parent in the sky' that we have created. The determined direction of the Scriptures, fully revealed in Jesus, is that God's justice is not achieved by punishment, but by the divine initiative we call grace, which enables us to bring about internal rightness, harmony, balance, and realignment with *what is*.

Richard Rohr *Daily Meditations* Sun March 9, 2025 From Centre for Action and Contemplation

Read

¹¹Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.' So he divided his assets between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'

²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'²²But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate. Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked

what was going on. ²⁷He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.' ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.

²⁹But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' ³¹Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

NRSVUE Luke 15: 11-32

Ponder

If you've heard this parable once or a thousand times, it has the power to change you.

- Who are you in this parable today? The father, the prodigal child, the hardworking child, an observer, a commentator...
 - Why?
 - Can you sit with the images and let yourself truly be in this story?
- Does something change when you realize who you've been playing?
- Can you imagine what other roles there are and what it would be like to be each of them?

Do

- If it's possible can you get together with a few others and read this story aloud with different people taking the different roles?

If not, perhaps even read it aloud to yourself, be a bit brave or have some fun and read each part in a different way.

- Watch out for the ways God might be wanting to reach out to you this week -like the father did with *both* sons. Can you respond to Gods open grace?

Prayer

So many things hold us back from your love -our mistakes, our shame, even our self-righteousness.

Help us to accept what is true and the way things truly are - to live that way - and so continue to walk with Jesus towards our own Easter story in a way that reflects that which is most true in our lives -your Grace. Amen

Listen

You may like listening to some of this music. The first piece is a song based on Hosea's words, 'Come back to me with all your heart', a setting by Gregory Norbert of the Monks of Western Priory.

<https://youtu.be/rHtvsVKovaw?si=sFGBo8RCrkuLrHUo>

As you listen to this last piece, *The Prodigal Son By The Fire*, could you imagine yourself, invited into a celebration with the whole house of heaven, with Jesus welcoming you, God embracing you and the Holy Spirit filling you. This celebration is for you. Let the music fill you with joy; you are home.

<https://youtu.be/-SGxt95P4X8?si=gDNxnYNxXk3lFEIn> –