



Blessed Sacrament Parish
Homily by Father Chris Comerford
March 31, 2019 Fourth Sunday in Lent

Reading I Joshua 5:9-12

Psalm 23

Reading II Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel John 9:1-41

Homily

The Prodigal Son—we've heard it so many times in our lives. Luke is the only Gospel that shares this amazing story of God's mercy with us. I want us to reflect upon it. The younger son, incredible gall that it took, asked his father for his inheritance. "Give me what is mine. I want it now." Complete selfishness. It wasn't easy. The father would have to sell half of his possessions. He does this and gives the money to the youngest son—and he takes off. Usually when you receive an inheritance you continue to do the work on the family farm, which was then passed down from generation to generation. This son crossed so many barriers in doing this.

Then he wasted it all. Incredible. So often we think that we have committed the unforgiveable sin, but clearly Jesus is giving us an example of someone whose behavior could not have been much worse in the way he treated his father. He wasted it all and then ended up tending the pigs. For Jews there was no lower job. This was the lowest he could possibly go. And he didn't get paid, and there was no food for him to eat. That is raw bottom.

Then there is a conversion. He thinks, "If I go home and work for my father, at least I will have enough to eat."

He works up a story, have you ever had to do that, work up a story and with head down you try and explain yourself? So he works up a story and goes back. The father sees him at a distance. My initial reaction is that I am glad that the father had mercy. He sees the son coming from a far distance and that means he is still looking for him. He wants him back, he is holding out hope that he will come back. And when he spots him he runs, runs to him and embraces him. This was a bear hug. This was a hug like you see when families are reunited after one of their loved ones has been serving overseas. This is a serious hug.

He has forgotten it all. He has his son back and that is all he cares about. What does the father do, he yells to his servants, "Quick. Put a robe on him. Put sandals on his feet." What does that mean? He is part of the family again. He has been restored. Does he deserve it? No. But this is about mercy. The father is just glad to have his son back. And

killing the fatted calf is very revealing. That would be done for a feast once or twice a year. This is a big deal. We see this when the servants mention it to the older brother. And the older brother knew what this meant. We haven't talked about him yet, have we?

The good brother is the faithful son—the one who works in the fields. Should he be mad about his brother? I think it is justified. But he did not have mercy. Was it his property that was wasted? No. It was his father's. But he was resentful of all the things that had happened. "I was the good son and you didn't even give me a goat. And you are now preparing a fatted calf for this son of yours?" If you notice, he separates himself from this because he does not say, "My brother." He says, "That son of yours." He closed himself off, but the father is trying to reason with him. "Look," he says, "Everything that I have is yours. We need to celebrate. He was dead, and come back to life. He was lost and is found."

If you believe in any possible way that God is not going to forgive you, listen to this story. This is the example that Jesus tells us about his Father in Heaven and each step that he will take to show us mercy. He doesn't want us to hold on to this suffering and pain. He wants us back. He wants us to know his mercy and his forgiveness.

Jesus tells us to turn back to the Father.

We should be thankful that we have a Father that loves us this much. And let's pray that we will show that same love of mercy and forgiveness to others.

*Father Christopher Comerford is pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Quincy, IL.
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