

Bulletin for Sunday 27 March 2022

Good morning, friends, on this, the fourth Sunday in Lent, which is Mothering Sunday.

Let's pause as we prepare to worship... and then praise God as we sing:

Hymn: Praise, my soul, the King of heaven (R&S 104)

Prayer: Loving God, we thank you for
holding us safely on our journey
through this complex world,
and for welcoming us with open arms
whenever we turn to you.
We thank you for all those who have inspired us,
and for those who have patiently nurtured us,
in our lives and in our faith.
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and on everything we give in your service,
today and every day. In Jesus 'name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Luke 15

Reflection: Notice why and how Jesus comes to tell these parables. The Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling about his acceptance - even positive welcome - for 'sinners'. But surely, we might think, that would be everyone? Clearly the Pharisees and scribes thought not! They were dividing people into the good and the bad - the religiously acceptable and the unacceptable sinners; but Jesus emphatically wasn't. These three parables go together. Like any good teacher, Jesus often emphasised his point by telling the same story in different ways: and here it was the story of the high value that God puts on the lost, and hence the vital importance of finding them.

In fact, the picture of God that emerges from today's reading is of a warm, welcoming figure. Not one that would condemn anyone out of hand; nor one that would impose behaviour by force or fear. The father in this last parable is remarkably open to letting his sons learn by experience, rather than trying to control their lives. He loves them; he waits for them in hope; and when he gets the chance he runs to welcome and to celebrate with joy. Is this the picture we have, in our hearts, of God; always waiting and wanting to embrace us with love?

These parables tell of God's love for the lost. Not for the perfect, or even the good, but for the lost. Basically for all of us. Thanks be to God! Amen

Hymn: O Love of God, how strong and true (R&S 100)

Prayers: God of compassion and love,
we pray for all in need of healing and comfort:
for the people of Ukraine, and everyone hurt by conflict,
for the scared, the displaced, the bereft and the lost,
and for those in need of safe homes and support.
Today we pray for mothers everywhere,
especially those parted from their children,
and for all who have lost their parents...
We pray too for our own communities,
for the sick, the grieving, the anxious...
for our families, our friends, and all those we love...
God of compassion and love,
wherever there is need, bring healing and comfort.
In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers,
including the unspoken prayers of our hearts. Amen

Hymn: Great is thy faithfulness (R&S 96)

Blessing: May we choose to walk humbly towards God;
and may the blessing of God
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love,
this week, and always. Amen

There will be a' Sunday at Six 'Zoom at 6pm this Sunday - all welcome.

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