

4<sup>th</sup> S. in Lent 3/30/2025  
Luke 15:11-32 C

SERMON TEXT IS THE APPOINTED GOSPEL FOR THIS SUNDAY,  
FROM THE 15<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

“You’re dead to me, Dad!” Ouch! That hurts! What parent would ever want to hear that from their own child? And yet, that is exactly what the younger son is really saying to his dad.

He goes to his father and demands, “*Father, give me the share of property that is coming to come*” (v. 12). According to the custom of the day, the younger son would receive 1/3 of the property. The older son would inherit 2/3 of the property – when dad was dead. But take note of this: dad is not dead. Dad is very much alive.

But that didn’t stop this younger son from going his dad, and saying, “Give me my stuff. I want it and I want it now.” What he’s really saying to his father is, “You’re dead to me.” This son is rude, selfish, self-centered, and obnoxious. But, you know what’s really amazing? His dad gives his son what his little heart desires. He divides his property between his sons and the younger son has money to burn. He can’t wait to get to the bright lights and the big city, so off he goes; off he goes for a far county – Bismarck, Las Vegas and Sodom and Gomorrah all rolled into one. This is a land of immorality, sensuality, idolatry, envy and division, fits of rage, jealousy and greed, anger, drunkenness. He went to the big city and lived it up. He burned through his money and found himself broke. Homeless. He falls so far that he finds himself doing what the Old Testament law forbid a good Jewish boy from doing – consorting with pigs. Nobody would give him a thing.

He hit rock bottom, and then, he kept going. And he got to thinking, *“How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants’”* (vv. 17-19). His words sound wonderful, repentant, but his words express a mixed bag. Notice that when he goes back to the father, he demands, he expects, his father to take him back on his terms, “Treat me as one of your hired servants”.

I. You can understand this younger son, his thinking and his sentiment, because you expect, you even demand, God treat you on your terms. You’ve said to God, “Give me what I’ve got coming, and give it to me now! I have my life and I want to live it now!” What you’re really saying is, “You’re as good as dead to me, God.” Know the marvelous thing about the Lord our God? He has, and He does. He has opened His Fatherly hand and given you all kinds of blessings of body and soul. And you’ve taken those good gifts of God and blown them on immorality, sensuality, idolatry; in envy and fits of rage, drunkenness. The world’s goods that money can buy always promise pleasure and treasure. You’ve burned through it all; tried it all; and you find yourself broke – not maybe financially, but emotionally, spiritually; empty, lacking joy and peace. How many times have you sinned against God and you turn to Him in repentance to say, “I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son, your daughter.” Take me back, but, BUT...I still want my anger, my bitterness, my envy, my lust, my greed, my jealousy, my refusal to forgive and be reconciled. Take me back, Father, BUT... on my terms.

Notice that in our lesson the Father has not yet spoken one, single word. He is just there, waiting for his son and daughters to come to him. He sees his son, feels compassion for him, and shows that compassion by running to he, embracing him, and kissing him. The Father will not accept his son back on his son's terms – he is not about to treat his son as a hired servant. He welcomes him back on his terms. It is fitting to celebrate and be glad, for his son was dead, but now alive; once he was lost, but now is found.

The father's terms are these: He welcomes His son home, puts the best robe on him, puts a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet. He kills the fattened calf, to eat and celebrate.

II. And those are the Father's terms for you, Dear Child of God. For though you had wasted the good gifts of God in prodigal – wasteful -- living, He does not treat you as your sins deserve. He has compassion on you. He clothes you with the best robe – the robe of His Son's own righteousness. He gives you something much better than a ring for your finger, He gives you a ring for you head – the crown of eternal life. As shoes for your feet, He gives you the readiness given by the Gospel of peace (cf. Eph 6:15). And, he welcomes you to the celebration of the marriage feast of the Lamb in heaven to feast at forever and ever without end.

Those are yours – not because of the sincerity of your sorrow over sin, nor the depth of your shame – these are yours His Son of God was stripped of His robe, and stood exposed for all the world to see. He was not given a ring, but a crown of thorns. He had no shoes, just a nail driven through His feet to pin Him to the wood of the cross. The Son bore the sins of the world – all the times you squandered God's good gifts, all the times

you lived as though it were your life; all the times God was as good as dead to you. Jesus suffered and died for all that. And because He did, you are forgiven.

III. God your Father washes you clean and makes you new in the waters of your baptism. Once you were dead in sin, but now you are alive in Christ. Once, you were lost in sin, but now the Good Shepherd has found and carried you home to His flock. And, He invites you to the celebration of His feast, where He feeds you with His life-giving Body and Blood, a foretaste of the feast of the Lamb in heaven to come.

Oh, and we dare not overlook the older brother – who, BTW, did not hesitate to take 2/3 of his father’s property, even when his father was very much alive. He hears the sound of the celebration, and is filled with jealousy and anger, *“Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him”* (vv. 29-30)! These are the older brother’s terms. He compares himself, and thinks himself **better** than his younger brother because of his works, his accomplishments, and what he has not done, or maybe we should – what he had **not** done. And, so his terms are that his father should be grateful and reward him.

Once again, Dear Saints of God, we see the Father’s terms. The father’s love is not based on who his sons are and what his sons do -- their works – what they have done, or not done. The father’s love is based on who He is; and because He is, by nature, a loving, compassionate father, he loves both his sons despite their sins.

The Father's terms are that He receives you for the sake of Jesus and, as Paul teaches us this morning, makes you **new** in Jesus so that you may be a living reflection of the Savior and His welcoming love to your neighbor. As He forgave you all your sins, you forgive your neighbor. As He remembers your sins no more, you keep no record of your neighbor's wrongs. As Christ sympathizes with you in your weaknesses, you bear your neighbor's burdens, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep, and always giving witness for the hope we have in Jesus.

MI. Our parable this morning is filled with Good News for us, my Friends, because it teaches us that God does not treat us as our sins deserve. He treats us with grace, grace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.