

March 10, 2021

## Family Lent Devotion: Week 4\*

### WEEKLY SCRIPTURE: LUKE 15:1-3, 11B-32 (CEB)

All the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus to listen to him. The Pharisees and legal experts were grumbling, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Jesus told them this parable:

Jesus said, “A certain man had two sons. The younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the inheritance.’ Then the father divided his estate between them. Soon afterward, the younger son gathered everything together and took a trip to a land far away. There, he wasted his wealth through extravagant living.

“When he had used up his resources, a severe food shortage arose in that country and he began to be in need. He hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He longed to eat his fill from what the pigs ate, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have more than enough food, but I’m starving to death! I will get up and go to my father, and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. Take me on as one of your hired hands.’” ’ So he got up and went to his father.

“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion. His father ran to him, hugged him, and kissed him. Then his son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quickly, bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Fetch the fattened calf and slaughter it. We must celebrate with feasting because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life! He was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

“Now his older son was in the field. Coming in from the field, he approached the house and heard music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what was going on. The servant replied, ‘Your brother has arrived, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he received his son back safe and sound.’ Then the older son was furious and didn’t want to enter in, but his father came out and begged him. He answered his father, ‘Look, I’ve served you all these years, and I never disobeyed your instruction. Yet you’ve never given me as much as a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours returned, after gobbling up your estate on prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’ Then his father said, ‘Son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found.’”

## WEEKLY LENTEN DISCIPLINE: PRACTICING GRATITUDE



*When you find yourself in a space such as Lent, where life seems thinner than usual and the journey more focused than normal, what do people of faith do to keep journeying on? In ancient times, rituals helped to remind the people of the promise, as yet unfulfilled, and gave reason to trust what seemed to be impossible.*

Each time I read this parable, I always ask the question:

“God, who are you calling me to hear today?”

This question opens our hearts and minds to all the messages God brings to us in this parable. One message that is revealed over and over again is the father’s love for both of his sons and the father’s gratitude for the youngest son’s return. In this story, one of the lessons the father demonstrates is how to practice gratitude.

Just like the father tells his son, we too are called to pay attention and to give thanks for all that God has done for us. When we pay attention to all that is good in our lives, we can see and feel (even if for a brief moment) God’s presence in our lives. By taking note and sharing these moments with others, we document our memory and our learnings; we acknowledge and identify our experiences of the holy. These “stampers,” as children I work with have called them, mark our hearts and minds, helping us see, feel, and remember God’s promise to be with us. They remind us of God’s gift of peace. These stampers, memories, experiences, give us hope that can carry us through the dark places. This week, I invite you to practice the **spiritual discipline of gratitude** with your family and community:

- Take time at the end of each day to share three things that you are grateful for.
- This might be done alone (writing it in a journal, typing it on your computer, or drawing images in an art pad), or it might be done around the dinner table or perhaps in another dedicated space in your home.
- Make sure to document the things you are grateful for, so you and your family can always remember God’s many blessings, even in the midst of sorrow, pain, loss, and/or grief.
- You might do this through a family journal (where everyone can write/draw/etc.; or you might create a family wall for the season of Lent, where family members can add their words of gratitude each day).

## WEEKLY WONDERING QUESTIONS:



- I wonder what you are grateful for?
- I wonder how these things help you see/feel/hear God?
- I wonder how you will prepare for the mystery of Easter?
- I wonder where you saw the color purple today?
- I wonder what the color purple reminds you of?

## WEEKLY FAMILY PRAYER:

*Traveling God, we know that Easter is a big mystery, and entering into it is big work. We thank you for Lent, the time when we get ready for the mystery of Easter. During this season, help us learn how to trust you, love you, and share your love with others. Lord, be with our family as we travel together, preparing our hearts and minds to enter into the mystery of Easter. Bless us in our work. It's in your holy name, we pray, Amen.*