

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Cycle C
September 11, 2022

1st Reading: **Exodus 32:7 – 11, 13 – 14.**

God relents and remembers at Moses' request.

Psalm: **Psalm 51:3 – 4, 12 – 13, 17, 19.**

I will rise and go to my father.

2nd Reading: **1 Timothy 1:12 – 17.**

The truth is the Christ came to save sinners.

Gospel: **Luke 15:1 – 32.**

God and all of Heaven rejoices at the repentance of one sinner.

God is good, **All the time**; All the time, **God is good**

Friends, I don't know about you but one of my greatest fears is that I will lose my memory. And I recognize that it is not what it used to be. It was my ace in the hole when I was in school; I could look at my notes or textbooks the night before an exam and it was like they were with me when I took the exam. Our lessons today remind me of the important role "remembering" plays in our life as Christians.

It is rare that I see a commonality in all 3 of our texts this weekend: call it a coincidence, and we know what Fr. Paul says about that, "God working anonymously;" or it could be serendipitous, or it could be just how they struck me. They all deal with "remembering."

Can you imagine God really needing Moses to challenge God to remember God's promise to Abraham and Sarah, to Isaac and Rebecca, to Jacob and Rachel and all their descendants? It was not a barter between God and Moses as much as it was a test to see if Moses really understood his role and he passed it brilliantly.

Paul in his letter to Timothy remembers his background that led him to his role as disciple of Jesus the Christ and promoter of the Good News: he was the “Public sinner number one,” who is now a show piece to the truth that Jesus came to save sinners. Grace is such a gift to each of us if we only remember.

Then we come to Luke’s Gospel, where today and for the next 2 weeks, Jesus teaches with parables: there are 3 in our selection for today, they all deal with the lost and the found. I don’t know about you, but when I lose something, it is usually a process of going back through my mind and discovering where I left it. Still a great cause for celebration when it happens. My wedding band is a perfect example, it took 3 years to find and no longer fit but still was a happy find.

In the 3rd and most famous parable, the prodigal son, we have a lost son who remembers how good his father’s home is, even if he were to become a servant; and a father who loves his son so much that he is waiting for his return; and a mother who is in the shadows supporting the father’s love. This parable has impacted millions of people for centuries. Shakespeare used it in both the *Merchant of Venice* and *Henry IV*. Rembrandt has a famous portrait that Henri Nouwen wrote a book on, *See our Reconciliation Chapel*. As Hans Kung reminds us, the God revealed here is a God who “identifies with us, our needs and hopes, who doesn’t demand but lifts, who doesn’t wound but heals, who forgives not condemns, who liberates rather than punish.” Do you remember ever feeling that kind of love and joy – I’m sure we all have our stories. As a matter of fact, part of why we gather is to share our stories.

As a young boy, I remember my dad warning me “if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!” In the course of spiritual direction, Monsignor Fitzgerald once told me “The Good News is so good, we have a hard time believing it.” Each of us is so precious so valuable to God, God wants us to become one with God, no matter how good a sinner we might be. In

the Eucharist we are about to celebrate and then live out when we leave here, Jesus says “Do this in memory of me!”

God wants us to learn how to remember:

What God has done for us in the past,
To ponder with clarity the undeserved mercy we experience daily.
The unconditional love that is showered on us every day
That God will always be our Good Shepherd.
God will be the persistent woman who continues to seek
God will be that lavishly generous parent.

This is what we need to remember as we envision how God acts in our world and how God equips us to be in and of our world.

God is good. All the time. All the time. God is good