**FOR THE WEEKEND OF MAR. 29-30, 2025**

Fourth Sunday of Lent

**Gospel Reading**

Lk 15:1-3; 11-32

The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him,

but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

So to them he addressed this parable.

Then he said, “A man had two sons,

and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So, the father divided the property between them.

After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.

When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need.

So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine.

And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any.

Coming to his senses he thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger.

I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.”’

So, he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.

His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’

But his father ordered his servants, ‘Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast,

because this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ Then the celebration began.

Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing.

He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean.

The servant said to him, ‘Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him.

He said to his father in reply, ‘Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends.

But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.’

He said to him, ‘My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours.

But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’”

**Intercession**

May we return to our Lord, with humility and genuine contrition, when our sins drive us away from Him. And may we help others find God’s abundant love and consolation through support of the Bishop’s Stewardship Appeal and its life-affirming programs.

**Copy for Bulletin Announcement**

In the Prodigal Son, one of Jesus’ most well-known parables, the errant son represents us, and the gracious father is God. But let’s shift the focus from the son the father. What is important isn’t that the son is a sinner. That’s a given; humans are innately flawed. What is notable is the father’s reaction to his sinning son. He ignores the infraction and welcomes him not only with open arms but throws him a feast to celebrate his return.

This is how big God’s love for us is. No matter what, He loves us. His love isn’t contingent on how sorry we are when we mess up or even how genuine our contrition is. The son in today’s Gospel does show remorse, but it seems mostly fueled by his empty stomach: “‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father.’” No, God’s love for us does not depend on us. It only derives from God’s unconditional and abundant love for us, His children. What an incredible gift.

Let us recommit to loving our own loved ones like God does. And let’s take it a step further, following Jesus’ new commandment to “love one another” (John: 13:34) by prayerfully considering supporting the Bishop’s Stewardship Appeal, which brings God’s infinite love to those in need.

**Copy for Pulpit Announcement**

“Love” gets bandied about quite casually in our society. We love fettucine alfredo. We love the latest Netflix series. We love getting lost in a good book. We love our favorite sports team. “Love’s” ubiquitous use diminishes it’s meaning.

But not in today’s Gospel. In today’s Gospel, Jesus shows us the incredible breadth of God’s love for us. The father loves his son wholly. It doesn’t matter if the son “deserves” this love or not. It is simply impossible for the father not to love his son. This is how God loves us. It’s pure parent love. It’s unconditional.

We benefit from God’s great love for us, and as Christ’s followers, we are called to share this good fortune with others, for “if God so loved us, we also must love one another” (1John 4:11). One way we can do this is to support those programs and initiatives that bring God’s incredible love to others. Please consider supporting the Bishop’s Stewardship Appealand pray for its success.

**Social Media Post/Content**

Photo: Father embracing his son.

Header: “You are here with me always; everything I have is yours” – Luke 15:31

Copy: Keeping God at the center of all we do brings an abundant life! Please support the Bishop’s Stewardship Appeal to bring God’s love and consolation to others.