

Lent 4C

Isaiah 12:1-6

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The sermon for the 4th Sunday of Lent is from the Gospel of St Luke 15:1-3, 11-32. "The Compassion of Christ"

Grace Mercy and Peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

"Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying. "This man receives sinners and eats with them".

This is the context to which our Lord would deliver the parable of the prodigal son.

Yes, a well-known parable to many of you, the story of a son who would receive his inheritance, flee the household only to quickly squander all that he had in his reckless living.....and there he would return with his tail between his legs...a look of shame, guilt, defeat...and ultimately acknowledging what he had done against his father.

Yet there is also the other son, the one who after many years of service to his father, would respond with great anger as He would refuse to go into the feast, the celebration that the prodigal had returned.....

For the other son served as an example to the pharisees and their stubborn self-righteous stance.....and thus, rather than being a joyful and momentous occasion for the lost son had returned, the other son grumbled....

likewise, just as Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners, this should have been a joyous occasion as it would serve as a reminder who our Lord is for sinners, yet it is met by a scathing review full of grumbling from the self-righteous pharisees.....

Self-righteousness...how deceptive it truly is....

For the nature of self-righteousness is the pursuit of righteousness through your own works.....yet in so doing....pride and arrogance inevitably follow....

This is the sweet poison of self-righteousness.

So sweet it seems, as pride convinces itself that it has it all together, finding assurance in its own arrogance, trusting in its own strength as if we can declare, merit and earn this righteousness.....and on the surface, it seems well and good, yet, spiritually, self-righteousness is a great poison.

Poison is something we avoid at all costs.

how poisonous it truly is....for the great poison of self-righteousness is the utter dependence on one self....soon, self-righteousness no longer depends on Christ and the Cross, the word and the sacraments, but self-righteousness prides itself on being self-sufficient, even cooperating with God for His

grace....yet this is the great poison, for when we truly understand what original sin brought to the table, self-sufficiency in terms of our salvation, in terms of forgiveness and the assurance of everlasting life, is an impossibility.

Yet this is the struggle, because everything else in this life, or so as the world teaches, is that we need to do something to get something, that we need to merit our way, and soon this too, seeps into our faith....

For the nature of faith is of trust....

The question is....what is your trust?

Is it of self-righteousness?

Yes, surely we try try and try even harder, and surely we convince ourselves that because of it, we are in a good place with God, yet at the end of the day, can we stand on our own self-righteousness in front of God.....

And the answer is no.....

Though self-righteousness attempts to remedy sin with works, it only produces a poison that sickens the soul with an illusion of safety, when in fact, in reality, it is of destruction. And soon the word becomes optional, Christ and the Cross becomes and supplement, and soon, the flesh takes solace in their own goodness that grumbles in its own arrogance and pride.

And thus we are called to repent.

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son”.

Indeed, ...the stinging indictment that you and I echo in this penitent life.....I a poor miserable sinner.....because we are not worthy. That is, we do not deserve anything from God, nothing at all, nothing...no matter how much good we bring to the table, no matter how shingly self-righteous we portray ourselves to be, we are still not worthy.

And for the prodigal son.....He realized what he had done, he knew what He deserved....and thus He repents....

And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.....

This is how the father responds....full of compassion....that is...with mercy and pity, knowing that his son was utterly helpless and had nothing to say to remedy what he had done.

And thus, it was all on the Father....

Surely, if the father would have said, you must do this and that, you must that and this...to be received into the family....this would have stoked the fire of self-righteousness in the pharisees, however, this parable reveals to them....this is not how the father works, rather, the Father is full of compassion....

And so it is for you.

In this season of lent, it is an important opportunity to dwell upon why our Lord compassion upon us.....we know that as sinners we deserve nothing at all, we very well know the condemning sentence to which we eternally deserve....

Yet this sentence is quelled by the compassion of our Lord.....not just any compassion, but the compassion that is, by the sending of His Son to be Your Savior. This is our Lord's compassion....for He sees a dead world that needs to be made alive....

Have you ever seen anyone try to resuscitate themselves? Its an impossibility, and that is what our sin brings the table.....

Yet on that table, there our Lord is, full of compassion, as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us....

Full of compassion our Lord is....

That He not only dwelt among us, but in this state of utter humiliation, our Lord Christ never wavered from fulfilling the will of God. That is, though we are unworthy....Worthy is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Yes, this is our Lord's compassion....

That He shed His blood on the Cross, the Cross to which we deserve nothing of, yet our Lord would be lifted high upon this tree, to die the big death for you, to be crucified, to be your

atonement, to withstand the pain and the struggle that would flow from the Cross, yet by His very blood,

there your sins are washed away,
there your sins are forgiven,
there your sins are purchased and won.....

At Calvary.....

The compassion at Calvary.....

This is what our Lord's compassion is for you....

And there by His death, He would breathe his last, to die on behalf of you.....

Do we deserve our Lord's death upon the Cross?
No....not all...none of us here deserve this...

Yet this is the compassion of our Lord, full of grace and truth, that our Lord would not only die on the Cross for you, but He rose from the grave....to defeat the grave and deliver you the assurance of salvation. To grant you the ironclad confidence that indeed, you are righteous.

Indeed, you are....

No longer are you busily trying to write the most righteous resume to God, no....for this resume is written by the blood of Christ, this resume is written by the outpouring of the water and word in Holy

Baptism to which our Lord has gathered you....this resume is written by the true body and blood our Lord feeds you for the forgiveness of your sins.....

This is your righteousness....this is your faith....

And thus be of good cheer, for this your brother was dead Jesus , says, and now he is alive; he was lost, and is found.....

Indeed, you are alive, your are found....and this is not your doing....but rather it is Christ who has made you alive, who has gathered you to be His own...so take heart my friends, for it is because of Christ, His compassion for you, that you are righteous.....that you are forgiven....

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen.