

Lessons for Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 31, 2019

Psalm 32 ~ *David uncovered his sins with his confession and rejoiced in God's forgiveness.*

Isaiah 12:1-6 ~ *God's glorious rescue for His people is the source of great joy!*

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 ~ *Through sinners reconciled in Christ, God appeals to those still estranged.*

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 ~ *Jesus told why we must join the Father's celebration when wayward sinners come home.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Celebrate the Father's Love!

The Psalm for today ends with the verse, "Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!" Today, in the middle of Lent, we look ahead to the completion of God's redemptive act in the "foolishness of the cross". Our boast is in the graciousness of God our Father who welcomes us home with a celebration of great joy. We pick up the song of Miriam at the Exodus, which is repeated in today's lesson from Isaiah, "The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation!"

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Thank you, Lord, for Your loving kindness! By the cross of Jesus You have made me Your child and called me home from my wandering. Help me share the joy of Your salvation with my neighbors and with strangers, as together we rejoice in the redemption You have won through Christ our Lord. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: We are ambassadors of God's reconciling love in Christ. God has placed great resources at our disposal, all for the task of bringing more wayward children of God back into the family, and once they have returned, celebrating their homecoming!

OFFERING PRAYER: As brothers told to celebrate and join the Father's joy,
You charge us, Lord, to live in peace and call Your children in.
Receive these gifts and bless their use that others may enjoy
The Father's love and warm embrace and freedom from their sin. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Although we have been rescued from the power of spiritual death, we are slow to share the knowledge of Christ's victory with those who are estranged from God, and slower still to welcome them into our fellowship with joy. Yet God has made us new creatures through Christ's sacrificial death, no longer counting our sins against us. What joy it is to know God's reconciling love!