

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 33)

ANTIPHON: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

RESPONSE: Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

LECTOR: I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise always on my lips; in the Lord my soul shall make its boast. The humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**

LECTOR: Glorify the Lord with me. Together let us praise his name. I sought the Lord and he answered me; from all my terrors he set me free. **R.**

LECTOR: Look towards him and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed. This poor man called; the Lord heard him and rescued him from all his distress. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ! I will rise and go to my father and tell him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) You must rejoice, my son, for your brother was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.

TODAY'S READINGS Joshua 5:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

NEXT WEEK (5th Sunday Lent, Year C): Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 125; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

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A father's undying love for his sons



The parable in today's gospel tells us about the experience of being loved and forgiven. It is about a father who shares his love equally with his two sons and, as they mature into adulthood, he gives them space to make their own decisions.

The younger son decides he wants to have his own life and so he takes his share of the inheritance, moves away, and becomes disconnected from his father and brother. The older son, however, decides to remain loyal and to serve his father. But one day, after arriving home after a day working in the fields, he becomes angry after seeing his father embrace his younger brother who has returned home, having wasted his inheritance.

It seems unbelievable that his father would welcome the younger sibling because he had turned his back on his father and the family home. However, this is where we witness God's mercy which goes beyond our human thoughts and ways. Seeing his younger son coming towards him, his father runs to him, welcoming and hugging him with tremendous joy and love. To his relief, the younger son finds his father is still the same loving and merciful man.

His father can't hide his joy, so he throws a party to celebrate his son's return. The younger son feels even more loved by his father than before he left the family property. The older son is invited to join the celebrations, but refuses, bitterly

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complaining that he has served his father loyally all his life but has never been treated like a king. Why would the younger brother be treated like a king when he turned his back on his father? It doesn't make sense! At this moment the older son doesn't feel loved, even though he has experienced his father's care all his life.

Both sons, in different ways, failed to appreciate and respond to their father's steadfast love and generosity. The younger son, only when he had nothing left to lose, returned home, only then to realise his father's great love and mercy. The older son, momentarily blinded by envy and jealousy, failed to recognise his father's unfailing love for him throughout his life and to share his father's joy in the younger son's return.

We too are greatly loved by God and we have the freedom to make our own decisions. Coming home to God, whatever the mistakes or poor decisions we have made along the way, is a journey of love. It takes courage and humility, as the younger son showed.

God, our Father, never changes or wavers his love for us. He is always waiting for us. Let us make the move and go back home to renew our relationship with God, our Father. Let us open ourselves to his unconditional love and mercy, and let's be ready to share God's life and love with others, especially with the wounded ones.