

Sunday, March 30, 2025 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

First Reading: Joshua 5:9-12

9 - The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

*The name Gilgal is based upon the Hebrew word "galal," meaning to roll.
When has God rolled away your sin, shame, and disgrace?
What sin, shame, and disgrace do you need God to roll away right now?*

10 - The Israelites kept the Passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month.
11-12 - On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land. The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land.

Israel had just experienced three major transitions – crossing the Jordan River, keeping the Passover, and manna ceasing as they eat the produce of the land.

*What major transition events and experiences have occurred in your life?
How did you experience them? How do you now commemorate and remember them?*

*We have talked about God's providing just in the nick of time.
Here the opposite occurs. Provision stops when it is no longer needed.
How has that also been a part of your experience?*

Psalm: Psalm 32

1 - Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!

The pain of not confessing

3 - While I held my tongue, my bones withered away, because of my groaning all day long.
4 - For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.

The relief and joy of confessing

5 - Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my guilt.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD."
Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.

How and when have you experienced both?

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

17 - If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

*Significance of the word "creation"
Other translations say, "The new has come" vs. "Everything has become new"*

*What in Paul's life changed – what did not change – when he met Christ?
What in your life changed – what did not change – when Jesus became your Savior and Lord?*

18 – God reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

20 - So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

To whom is God making His appeal through you?

21 - For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Martin Luther called this the great or fortunate exchange – Jesus took on our sin, we receive His righteousness.

Dr. Ken Jones of Grand View University re when he got married

Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

1-3 - Tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. The Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable.

Jesus told three parables about being lost and about rejoicing when the lost has been found. A sheep got lost by being distracted – by just wandering off.

A coin got lost through no fault of its own. Maybe it got dropped or knocked off the table.

A son got lost through willful, deliberate, and intentional action on his part.

Whom do you know who got lost in each of these three ways?

Steps away from the father

12 - The younger son said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them.

13 - A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

14 - When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

15 - So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.

16 - He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

Steps back to the father

17 - But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!"

18-19 – "I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'"

20 - So he set off and went to his father.

20 - But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.