

Fourth Sunday in Lent March 31, 2019

Year C – the Gospel of Luke

Lutheran

Living the ^ Lectionary

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
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<http://worshipwell.church/2016/02/29/431/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 571 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 245

“God loved the world so that He gave”

“August Crull (translator of LSB 571) was born January 27, 1845 in Rostock, Germany, where his father, Hofrat Crull, was a lawyer. He was educated at the Gymnasium in Rostock, and at Concordia College in St. Louis and Fort Wayne where he graduated in 1862. His father died soon after he began studying at the Gymnasium. His mother then married Albert Friedrich Hoppe, who later became the editor of the St. Louis edition of *Luther's Works*. In 1865, Crull graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He became assistant pastor at Trinity Church in Milwaukee and also served as Director of the Lutheran High School. Later he was pastor of the Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. From 1873 to 1915, he was professor of the German language and literature at Concordia College in Fort Wayne, Indiana...

Crull was a distinguished hymnologist and translated many hymns that appeared in several Lutheran hymnals. He published a German grammar and edited a book of devotions, *Das walte Gott*, based on the writings of Dr. C.F.W. Walther. His project of translating Lutheran hymns so they would be accessible to American Lutherans bore its first fruits when he published a book of English hymns at the Norwegian Synod publishers in Decorah, in 1877.

--www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/”

- [https://hymnary.org/text/god loved the world so that he gave](https://hymnary.org/text/god%20loved%20the%20world%20so%20that%20he%20gave)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYKVPJE1D2U> Displays Hymn 245 from TLH while playing melody on a piano.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bCgG2TRHW90> Organ, with a prelude. Organist is Mark Peters "Six Hymn Improvisations, Set 9." [Concordia Publishing House Music](#)

or

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 972 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 319

“I trust, O Christ, in You alone”

Gilbert E “Doan (translator, born 1930) was educated at Harvard University (BA 1942); Lutheran Theological Seminary (BD 1955); the University of Pennsylvania (MA 1962, though he returned it to the school to protest their policies); and Wagner College (DD, late 1970s). He served as a campus pastor in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1955-61); Northeastern Director of the National Lutheran Campus Ministry; and pastor of the Lutheran Church of the Holy Communion, Philadelphia (1984-95).

His works include: *The Preaching of Frederick W. Robertson* (editor), 1964, *Renewal in the Pulpit*, 1966, *Sermons on Peace and War*, *Preaching to College Students*, *Worship in Campus Ministry*. --www.hymntime.com/tch/

- [https://hymnary.org/text/i trust o christ in you alone](https://hymnary.org/text/i%20trust%20o%20christ%20in%20you%20alone)

“One of the surprises of Lutheran Service Book is that there are more hymns in the LSB collection than those found in the pew edition. While the pew edition’s highest hymn number is 966, today’s Hymn of the Day Bible Study covers hymn 972. “I Trust, O Christ, in You Alone” can be found in the Lutheran Service Builder computer software as well as LSB Accompaniment for the Hymns and LSB Guitar Chord Edition. “I Trust” appeared as Lutheran Worship 357, and as Lutheran Book of Worship 395 in a translation prepared for that hymnal. “In Thee Alone, O Christ, My Lord” was its

title as hymn 319 in The Lutheran Hymnal. It has also since appeared in Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal as hymn 437..."

- <https://blogs.lcms.org/2017/lcms-worship-hymn-of-the-day-studies-for-lent-three-year-one-year-lectionary/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kK0uwvAHA6U> Piano, played to the melody, "Allein zu dir" TLH 319, by [Andrew Remillard](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9n6HAoTUtWo> What happens when Bach gets a hold of a melody... Cantate BWV 33
- http://www.emmanuelmusic.org/notes_translations/translations_cantata/t_bw_v033.htm The words in German and English to Cantate BWV 33
-

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

OT - "You will say in that day..."

Psalm - "but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD."

Epistle - "be reconciled to God."

Gospel - "For this my son was dead, and is alive again"

Isaiah 12:1-6; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Joshua 5:9-12 (Next week: Isaiah 43:16-21; RCL, the same reading)

"...Not all of the psalms in the Bible are located in the Book of Psalms. And not all of the good news in the Bible is located in the New Testament. Today's "psalm" is a song of good news located in the Scroll of Isaiah..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2704 [Rolf Jacobson](#) Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

"Isaiah 12 is a short and beautiful hymn of praise. We've seen the promises which Isaiah has given to the Lord's people in the first 11 chapters of his book, and now he promises joy, that the people will break forth in praise to God. "You will say in that day, 'I will give thanks to You, O Lord!" (Isaiah 12:1). If we are ever tempted to think that the Old Testament is all Law and threats with no Gospel or comfort, then the antidote is Isaiah 12, a little hymn of joy that is full of comfort..."

- https://www.whatdoesthismean.org/uploads/2/5/6/3/25633380/isaiah_12_1-6.pdf Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller, Hope Lutheran Church in Aurora, CO

The LORD Is My Strength and My Song

12 You^[a] will say in that day:

“I will give thanks to you, O LORD,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
that you might comfort me.

²“Behold, God is my salvation;
I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD^[b] is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation.”

³With joy you^[c] will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴And **you will say in that day:**

“Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵“Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known^[d] in all the earth.

⁶Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your^[e] midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

- a. [Isaiah 12:1](#) The Hebrew for *you* is singular in verse [1](#)
- b. [Isaiah 12:2](#) Hebrew for *Yah, the Lord*
- c. [Isaiah 12:3](#) The Hebrew for *you* is plural in verses [3, 4](#)
- d. [Isaiah 12:5](#) Or *this is made known*
- e. [Isaiah 12:6](#) The Hebrew for *your* in verse [6](#) is singular, referring to the *inhabitant of Zion*

“...Isaiah 12 is composed of two songs, each beginning with the phrase, **"You will say in that day" (12:1, 4):** "that day," when the pride of everyone shall be humbled and the Lord alone will be exalted (2:11, 17); "that day," when people will throw away their idols of silver and gold (2:20); "that day," when God will bring judgment against the women and men of Zion (3:16-26), when those who remain are called holy (4:2-3). "That day" is a day of judgment and salvation, a day that calls God's people forward...

The first song in this passage (verses 1-2) is sung by an individual (the "you" addressed in verse 1 is singular, as are the pronouns in verses 1-2), offering thanksgiving for deliverance by the God who is "my salvation" (verse 2). Although the individual is not identified (could it be Isaiah, whose own name means "God is salvation"?), the end of the song hearkens back to the deliverance from Egypt, quoting Exodus 15:2: "The Lord God is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation" (verse 2b; cf. Psalm 118:14)...

The second song (verses 4-6) offers a refrain of Thanksgiving to the "Holy One of Israel" (verse 6b), the one whose "name is exalted" (verse 4) and who "has done gloriously" (verse 5). Isaiah calls

on the people to lift their voices in praise to God: "Give thanks...sing praises...shout aloud and sing for joy!" This is a communal song ("you" is plural, as are the verbs in this section), as if a whole choir has joined voices with the soloist who sang in the first two verses

The verse that ties these two songs together is addressed to the gathered community: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (verse 3). In its historical setting, the verse probably refers to a ritual activity, most notably during the Feast of Tabernacles. As it connects the two songs, however, verse 3 is a reminder that God's salvation is fundamental to life, as basic to survival as the water that falls from the sky and springs forth from the earth..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=479
Audrey West Adjunct Professor of New Testament, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, IL

Psalm 32; RCL, the same reading (Psalm 126; RCL, the same reading)

"...Psalm 32 is one of the seven "penitential psalms" of the early church (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143), psalms so categorized because they were seen as particularly appropriate for the developing Christian emphasis on individual sin and forgiveness. The designation is useful so long as it does not overlook the Old Testament's emphasis on the relation of body and soul, person and world.

Commentators have suggested a late date for Psalm 32, in part because of its movement from a particular expression of confession and forgiveness to a more generalized teaching. My experience, says the psalmist, leads me to say, "Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you" (verse 6); more, "I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go" (verse 8). That teaching emphasis coupled with the opening beatitudes ("Happy are those...", verses 1-2) and the lumping together of what were once quite distinct terms for "sin" ("transgression," "sin," "iniquity") causes many to call Psalm 32 a "wisdom psalm," one of those psalms that reflect theologically, and practically on the breadth of human experience..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1824 **Fred Gaiser** Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Blessed Are the Forgiven A Maskil^[a] of David.

32 Blessed is the one whose **transgression (pasa)** is forgiven,
whose **sin (hata)** is covered.

² Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no **iniquity (awon)**,
and in whose spirit there is no **deceit (remiyah)**.

³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up^[b] as by the heat of summer. **Selah**

⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not cover my iniquity;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. **Selah**

⁶Therefore let everyone who is godly
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;
surely in the rush of great waters,
they shall not reach him.

⁷You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. **Selah**

⁸I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

⁹Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,
or it will not stay near you.

¹⁰Many are the sorrows of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.

¹¹Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

- a. [Psalm 32:1](#) Probably a musical or liturgical term, ("The word should not be read aloud" – Limburg)
- b. [Psalm 32:4](#) Hebrew *my vitality was changed*

"There is however a certain tension between the use of the psalm at a time of repentance and the rejoicing, happy theme that occurs at the beginning and the end. The structure or story that runs through the psalm explains that tension:

1-2 Four pictures of happiness

3-5 Confession is good for the soul--and body

6-11 Instruction on how to live a guilt-free, joy-filled life

Listening to the Text

1-2: Happiness is... The heading associates the psalm with David. Careful readers have often suggested that it would fit well into the time after the affair with Bathsheba (see the heading to Psalm 51 as well as the lectionary).

These opening verses give voice to the experience of forgiveness of sin, expressed in a gathering of the four major Old Testament words for sin. Verse 1 speaks of *transgression, from the Hebrew pasha*. The sense is rebellion, like the rebellion of one treaty party against another (2 Kings 1:1) or of children against parents (Isaiah 1:2). According to this picture, happiness is a life no longer being lived in rebellion against God.

The word *sin translates the Hebrew hata* which has the sense of missing a target. The same Hebrew word appears in Judges 20:16 which tells of the seven hundred left-handed marksmen who could "sling a stone at a hair, and not miss." Happiness, according to this picture, is having one's life headed in the right direction, on course, no longer wrongly aimed off target.

The third word is *iniquity*, the Hebrew *awon* (verse 2; translated "guilt" in verse 5). The sense of this word is to be bent over, twisted or crooked. The word also occurs in Isaiah 24:1, speaking of the Lord *twisting* the earth and in Psalm 38:6 where a sick person says "I am utterly *bowed down* and prostrate..." According to this word, happiness is being no longer twisted or bent out of shape, but straightened out.

Finally, *deceit* translates the Hebrew word *remiyah*, which has the sense of being treacherous, or not reliable, like a weapon that backfires or cannot be depended on (Hosea 7:16 speaks of a "*defective* bow"). This word defines happiness as living in a manner that is honest and forthright.

In sum, according to this psalm, the person is happy who is not rebelling against God, whose life is on track, straightened out and marked by integrity...

3-5 Confession is... This section provides a before and after picture of the psalmist's life. *Before* confessing the wrongdoing of which the psalmist was guilty, that bottling up of guilt took a terrible physical toll. The symptoms here are psychosomatic, brought on by the person's own decision to keep the wrongdoing to himself or herself. Verse 4 indicates the psalmist's realization that a part of the problem was theological as well as psychological; things with God were not as they should be. Verse 5 points back to the joy that comes with confession and forgiveness (verses 1-2).

6-11 Instructions on how to live. Of key importance for understanding this section are verses 8 and 9. Verse 8 indicates that the psalmist is going to engage in teaching. That teaching comes to expression in verse 9 which says essentially, "Don't be stupid! Use your God-given intelligence!"

What then would be the shape of a God-directed life? There are a number of clues: Pray in times of distress (verse 6). Trust in God as a secure, safe place to put your life (verse 7). Know that God's steadfast love (*hesed*) surrounds you. And then, rather than groaning your life away, you will be glad in the LORD (*simchah* as in the fall festival celebrating God's teaching, *simchat torah*). You will rejoice and you will no longer waste away and brood in silence (verse 3) but will shout for joy!

Toward Teaching and Preaching

The line in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America speaks of the Creator endowing every person with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The psalms, which speak much about happiness, do not speak of pursuing happiness. According to the psalms, God's steadfast love is on the hunt, chasing after me. Another psalmist put it this way (translating the Hebrew more literally than usual) "Surely goodness and mercy (*hesed*) shall chase after me all the days of my life..." (Psalm 23:6)."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=736
James Limburg Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21; RCL, the same reading (Philippians 3:4b-7) 8-14; RCL, Philippians 3:4b-14)

"(Paul) had had a good experience in the city of Corinth. The church he planted was filled with people dear to his heart, and though the Corinthians were a feisty group loaded with potential problems, Paul loved them and, even after leaving Corinth, prayed for them every day. So how it must have hurt to learn that in Corinth his reputation has been shattered. After Paul's departure some nay-sayers came to town and called Paul into question. They impugned Paul's credentials,

claiming he had no right to call himself an apostle. They alleged that Paul was a money-grubber and a charlatan whose motives were impure and whose so-called “gospel” was just so much hogwash and heresy.

So in this second letter to the Corinthians Paul, with grit teeth sometimes and through tears at other times, has to defend himself. At the conclusion of this fifth chapter, Paul’s desire to clear his name combines with his effort to repeat the true gospel, resulting in a sublime passage of great power. The centerpiece is reconciliation. By grace alone and because of Jesus, God has reconciled us to himself.

The result of this cosmic reconciliation is that we now look at everything differently. We look at everything and every**one** through the lens of reconciliation. We are ambassadors of reconciliation as we call others to believe in Jesus and so find themselves in a good relationship with God. But it’s not just about the vertical dimension between God and us. Being caught up in God’s salvation changes everything on this human, horizontal plane, too...”

➤ https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/lent-4c/?type=lectionary_epistle Scott Hoezee

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.^[a] The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling^[b] the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 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.

- a. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) Or *creature*
- b. [2 Corinthians 5:19](#) Or *God was in Christ, reconciling*

“New Creation, New Identity

In this reading, Paul employs two dominant themes: 1) new creation and 2) reconciliation. Are these the same thing? Or does reconciliation correlate with justification, while new creation correlates with sanctification? Or is there some other distinction being made here? I would suggest that new creation and reconciliation are two ways of saying the same thing...

What would it mean, then, to understanding reconciliation under the heading of new creation? I would suggest that homiletically, these themes can be combined with the concept of a new identity. Our identities are determined by what God says of us. He created us by speaking, and he recreated by speaking as well. When God reconciles us to himself by forgiving our sins, he is not employing an accounting trick, but he is giving us a new identity. We are a new creation because he says we are...

This text is valuable to Lutheran preachers because it gives us a more expansive understanding of the forgiveness of sins. The more expansive view is later echoed by Luther in the sixth chief part of the Small Catechism: “Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

➤ <https://concordiatheology.org/2013/02/lent-4-2-corinthians-516-21-march-10-2013/> David R. Maxwell Professor of Systematic Theology, Systematic Theology, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO

Some thoughts on extending this text.

“A sermon on this text should remind the hearers of the new creation which God has granted them with all the amazing grace that is involved in it; it should also challenge the same newly-created to carry their message by deed and word to all about them. The reputed “impossibility” of converting Muslims to Christianity is not the issue. Ambassadors represent their masters. We can do no less, and the Spirit of Christ then works the new creation in those who hear and understand.

We rejoice in the knowledge that in many parts of the world the Spirit of Christ has led Muslims to see and understand God’s reconciling love in Jesus the Christ...”

Read the full article and sermon at:

- http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/16-2_Islam/16-2_Zorn.pdf Herbert Zorn

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32; RCL, Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 (Luke 20:9-20; RCL, John 12:1-8)

“Our text today is the Holy Gospel from Luke 15. It is the famous and well-loved Parable of the Prodigal Son...”

Thus far in his ministry Jesus has been preaching the good news of the kingdom. He has been calling sinners to repentance, so that they would receive from him forgiveness for their sins. Jesus has been gathering disciples, followers, who are eager to hear the divine wisdom coming from his lips. And the people who are following Jesus are not always the best and the brightest or the cream of the crop. Indeed, Jesus has been reaching out to the least, the last, and the lost. He’s been calling people whom the religious elite of Israel would look down on... Jesus would even have meals with these people, these public sinners, and that was rather shocking. It wasn’t that Jesus approved of their sin or condoned it—far from it. But when sinners realized their sin and their lostness, Jesus offered them a safe haven to come to—back to God... So that’s the situation we’re dealing with when we enter Luke chapter 15. Jesus is hanging out with sinners, and the respectable people didn’t like it...”

- <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2016/03/the-prodigal-celebration-sermon-on-luke-15-1-3-11-32-by-pr-charles-henrickson/> Rev. Charles Henrickson currently serves at St Matthew Lutheran Church in Bonne Terre, Missouri.

“The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 15th Chapter”

15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

³ So he told them this parable: *These two are skipped in this reading: The Parable of the Lost Sheep and The Parable of the Lost Coin*

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

¹¹ And he said, *“There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. ¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to^[b] one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.*

¹⁷ *“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’ ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’” ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’^[c] ²² But the father said to his servants,^[d] ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.*

²⁵ *“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”*

- a. [Luke 15:8](#) Greek *ten drachmas*; a *drachma* was a Greek coin approximately equal in value to a Roman *denarius*, worth about a day's wage for a laborer
- b. [Luke 15:15](#) Greek *joined himself to*
- c. [Luke 15:21](#) Some manuscripts add *treat me as one of your hired servants*
- d. [Luke 15:22](#) Or *bondservants*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“Gather round, and today I’ll tell you the story of “The Lost Boys.” No, not the Lost Boys from Peter Pan. This is a different story. It’s a story that Jesus tells, actually. It’s the tale of two boys that get lost. They get separated from their father, through their own stupidity and pig-headedness, and yet their father is very gracious and kind toward them, patient beyond all measure, and he wants to welcome them back with open arms.

“Oh, wait a minute, Pastor! Aren’t you talking about the parable of the Prodigal Son? That’s a very famous story that Jesus told. You know, the one about the son who took his inheritance money and left home and wasted it all in a far country, and so on. But in that story, Pastor, I’m afraid there’s only one lost son, not two. So shouldn’t you call it ‘The Lost Boy,’ singular, instead of ‘The Lost Boys,’ plural?”...

Well, we’ll see, dear listener, we’ll see. In any case, let’s start the story: “There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’”...

“Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.”... And here’s where the “prodigal” part comes in. That old-timey word “prodigal” means “wasteful.” And that’s what this boy does with all the wealth his father gave him—he wastes it...

“And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.”... He hires himself out to do any sort of menial job he can find, and, for a Jewish boy, it’s work about as demeaning and low as you can go. He ends up feeding pigs, unclean animals according to Jewish law...

So now, what to do? With only pigs to talk to, the young man has some time to think it over... The memory of his father’s generosity and kindheartedness is turning his heart toward home...

A plan is born. The boy figures even being hired help on his father’s place is better than starving in a pig sty. And so he’s concocted this plan, sort of a ‘working it off’ scheme...

So, what do you think? This boy certainly deserves to suffer. He got a taste of it in the pig sty. And now he will be reduced to the status of a servant. Serves him right. And if that’s what happened, we’d all have to say, it’s more than fair.

But here the story takes an unexpected twist. “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 a remarkable father, full of forgiveness!

“And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”...

The father interrupts, his joy is so great...

This loving and patient father has his son back, solely through his own forgiveness and compassion...

The father’s joy is overflowing: “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

And that, dear listener, is the story of “The Lost Boy,” the prodi-

“Hey, wait a minute, Pastor, I thought you said this story was about ‘The Lost Boys,’ plural! You said there were two of them. So what about the other one? Let’s hear about him.”

OK, thanks for reminding me. Can’t stop with just the one. Jesus doesn’t stop there, does he? He goes on:

“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing... Well, if this older son shares any of the character of his father, I bet he’s happy the runaway, his brother, is back home now. Right?

Wrong. “But he was angry and refused to go in.” ... Hey, older son, this is not a very polite thing to do, to stay outside, when your father is having a big party to welcome your brother back. It’s actually kind of insulting.

But what does the father do? “His father came out and entreated him.”... And now he goes out, leaves the party, goes outside to entreat this older son, who is acting so disrespectfully and coldly.

But the older son reveals his true character now as he speaks to his father. “Look,” he begins. Notice, he doesn’t even start with a respectful “Father.” Just a rude “Look.” ...“Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends... The older son is thinking like a servant, not a son. To him, it’s all about what he deserves, what he ought to get for “slaving away” all these years.

He continues his angry, jealous rant Notice, too, that the older son won’t even refer to his brother as “my brother.” He calls him “this son of yours.” The older son begrudges his father’s generosity. He truly does not share his father’s character, which is to have mercy and to forgive.

The father responds: “Son”—notice, he calls him “son,” even though this son couldn’t even come up with a respectful “Father.” “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours...

I think now you can see why I called this parable the story of “The Lost Boys,” plural. The first lost boy was the prodigal son, who ran away from home and lost everything he had. But this other son, the older one—he is a lost boy, too. Lost, even while staying at home. He has lost the mercy and the compassion, the forgiveness and the joy of the father.

The father wants the older son to come in and join the party. But will he? We’re not told. This is where the story stops. The parable is left open-ended. Jesus leaves it open-ended, because he wanted the Pharisees and the scribes to see themselves in this story as the older son—to see themselves and to repent...

You see, God’s love is sacrificial, his compassion is costly—to him. In the story, when the father ran out to greet his younger son, when the father came out to entreat his older son—both times the God-figure in the story was humbling himself, lowering himself, in order to bring his children in. His love was costly. Likewise, God’s love toward us is costly...”

➤ <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2013/03/the-lost-boys-sermon-on-luke-151-3-11-32-by-pr-charles-henrickson/>

Pastor Charles Henrickson



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