

St. Louis Catholic Church

Saturday of the 2nd Week of Lent

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

Psalm 103

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

To know that we are unconditionally loved is one of the most powerful feelings in the world. Many of us can appreciate that because we had parents who loved us despite the way we often behaved. So many times as a priest, I have witnessed parents who have been deeply devastated because a child fell into crime, drugs, divorce or maybe left the Church. Though pained deeply, they still love their child and can never abandon them. Actually, they are showing the love of God the Father for all of us to witness.

Luke 15 is the most wonderful chapter in the Bible. Maybe you have one that you like better, but nowhere do we see the powerful mercy and care of Our God for each person. Not just mankind but every individual. Luke 15 is comprised of 3 parables--the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son. The latter is the focus of today's Gospel. In all 3 parables, God is like a shepherd who seeks out and works to find one lost coin; He is the loving Father who waits patiently for the lost son to return. He never gives up.

In fact many call this parable the one of the Loving Father rather than the Prodigal Son. After his bad choices, selfishness, and terrible condition of life the son chooses to go home. He realizes being a servant to his father is better than being broke and friendless. On his way home, the Father is waiting and watching. He runs out and embraces the son and says "let's celebrate", this son who was lost is found. The son doesn't even say that he was wrong or sorry but the father also doesn't say "I told you so". He doesn't make him crawl and beg. He just loves unconditionally. The story is a story of God toward all of us. It is a story of the Sacrament of Penance.

The father, like God, never gave up on his son. Micah in the 8th Century acknowledged and proclaimed a God of compassion and fidelity even to a nation who is merciless and unfaithful. Micah calls on God to be the shepherd of the people. They were living in one of the worst, corrupt times of Israel's history. Apostasy, idolatry, social, political, and religious injustice was rampant. The religious laws were ignored.

Certainly our age can mirror that as we reflect on the reality of our own time. Micah reminds us, how blessed we are to find ourselves in the hands of a God, "who removes guilt and pardons sin, who does not persist in anger forever, but delights in clemency and will again have compassion on us".

Are we in serious sin? Do we violate God's Commandments? Do we place God 1st in our life? Are we just, kind, forgiving, merciful? Are we faithful to our commitments? Do we reflect a life made in the image and likeness of God? Do we respect the dignity of men and women? Do we use people? Do we pray daily? Are we open to God's will and way? Do people see us as good Catholic Christians? Do we pick and choose what it means to be a disciple of Christ? Are we

selfish or greedy or envious or jealous? Do we judge, condemn, gossip or slander? Do we lie or bear false witness against others?

Yes we are human and sometimes we find ourselves so caught up in life, our choices, our problems and our decisions and we wake up like the younger son and realize what we have lost. Be not afraid! Be humble? Be honest! Be courageous! Be contrite! Be on your way home.

I promise you that waiting, watching with a loving heart and embracing arms is your Heavenly Father. Experience it in your heart and in the Sacrament of Penance. Like the young son you can hear that you are still loved, wanted, accepted and forgiven. Come home. Come back to me is the plea of the Father. Psalm 103 says "The Lord is kind and merciful".

God Bless,
Msg. John McArthur