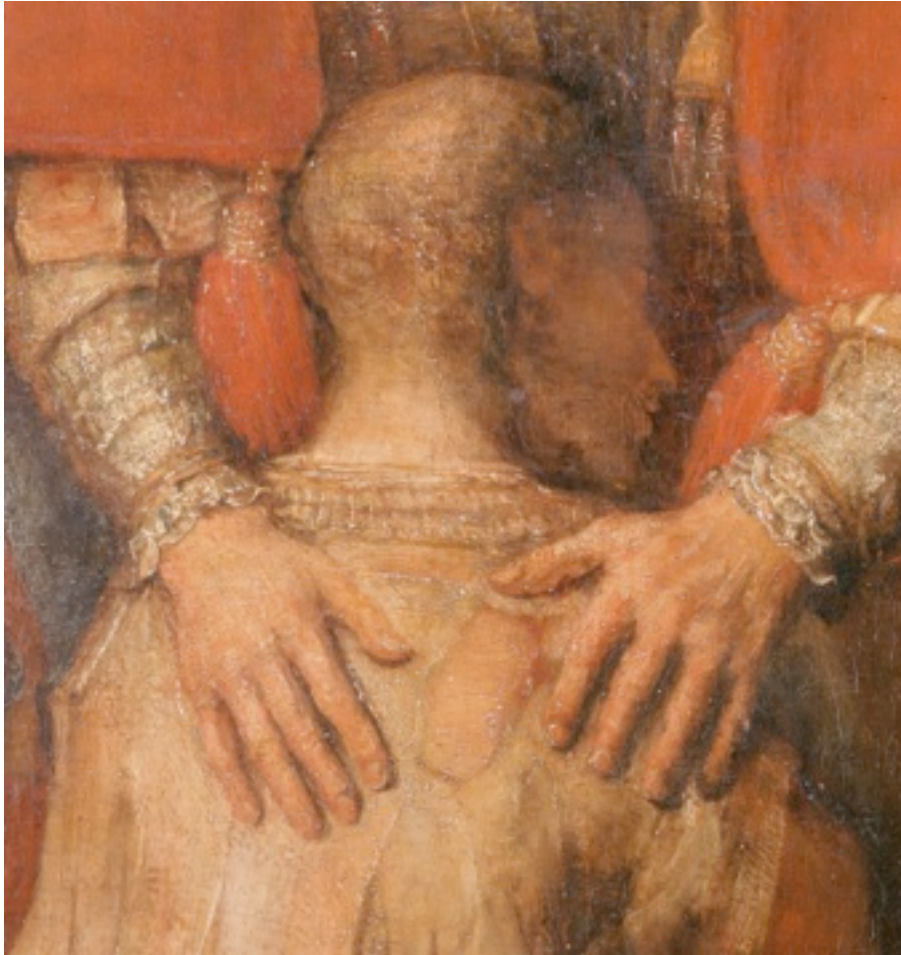


Reflecting on



Reconciliation

A Lenten Evening Series

St. James' Episcopal Church, Potomac, Maryland

Lent 2016

Overleaf and throughout this bulletin:
Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, c. 1661–1669.
262 cm × 205 cm. Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg

We begin in darkness or dim light.

All stand, and the Officiant greets the people with these words.

Officiant: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

People: **God's mercy endures forever.**

Reader:

This is the message we have heard from the Lord and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. *1 John 1:5-7*

The Officiant then says the Prayer for Light, first saying

Let us pray.

Almighty and most merciful God, kindle within us the fire of love, that by its cleansing flame we may be purged of all our sins and made worthy to worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The candles are now lighted, as are other candles and lamps as may be convenient.

Officiant: I make my prayer to you, O God; be merciful to me.
People: **I make my prayer to you, O God; be merciful to me.**

Officiant: Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.
People: **Be merciful to me.**

Officiant: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
People: **I make my prayer to you, O God, be merciful to me.**

Officiant: Create in me a clean heart, O God:
All: **And renew a right spirit within me.**

Song (*Phos hilaron*, as announced)

Scripture Reading

Reader: A reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 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.

2 Corinthians 5:16-20

Reader: Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.
People: **Thanks be to God.**

Silence

A chime will sound to begin a few minutes of silence.

A second chime will sound to close the silence.

Following the period of silence we will pray responsively.

Prayers

Holy God, Creator of heaven and earth,
Have mercy on us.

Holy and Mighty, Redeemer of the world,
Have mercy on us.

Holy Immortal One, Sanctifier of the faithful,
Have mercy on us.

Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, One God,
Have mercy on us.

Hear our prayers, O Christ our God.
Hear us, O Christ.

Forgive our enemies, persecutors and slanderers, and turn their hearts.
Hear us, O Christ.

Give us true repentance; forgive us our sins of negligence and ignorance and our deliberate sins; and grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit to amend our lives according to your word.

**Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy on us.**

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession may be offered, either silently or aloud.

Officiant:

Almighty, everlasting God, let our prayer in your sight be as incense, the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Give us grace to behold you, present in your Word and Sacraments, and to recognize you in the lives of those around us. Stir up in us the flame of that love which burned in the heart of your Son as he bore his passion, and let it burn in us to eternal life and to the ages of ages. **Amen.**

Song (as announced)

Program and discussion

Following the discussion we will close by reading together :

Canticle Q

A Song of Christ's Goodness, Anselm of Canterbury

**Jesus, as a mother you gather your people to you; *
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.**

**Often you weep over our sins and our pride, *
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgment.**

**You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, *
in sickness you nurse us and with pure milk you feed us.**

**Jesus, by your dying, we are born to new life; *
by your anguish and labor we come forth in joy.**

**Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; *
through your gentleness, we find comfort in fear.**

**Your warmth gives life to the dead, *
your touch makes sinners righteous.**

**Lord Jesus, in your mercy, heal us; *
in your love and tenderness, remake us.**

**In your compassion, bring grace and forgiveness, *
for the beauty of heaven, may your love prepare us.**

Psalm 134

**Behold now, bless the LORD, all you servants of the LORD, *
you that stand by night in the house of the LORD.**

**Lift up your hands in the holy place and bless the LORD; *
the LORD who made heaven and earth bless you out of Zion.**

Amen.





Rembrandt, The Prodigal Son Among the Pigs. British Museum.
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Luke 15:11 Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons.

12 The younger of them 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.

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 I will get up 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 like one of your hired hands."

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

21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

25 ¶ "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.

27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.'

28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.

29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.

30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!'

31 Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"



You might want to spend some time over the course of the week gazing at the painting and letting your mind wander to the parable. Below are some questions to consider.

The painting

- * how do you know it's a painting of this story? any discrepancies?
- * what jumps out at you?
- * what do you think about the painting's composition, how it is laid out?
- * what are the bystanders thinking? who do you think they are?
- * what do you think about the way the elder son is painted?
- * what do you think about the way the father's hands are depicted?
- * what about the father's clothing?
- * why does the younger son still have his sword?
- * what do you think about the way the younger son's head is depicted?

The story (Luke 15:11-32)

- * why do you think the younger son left?
- * why did he return?
- * what do you think it's like in the "far country"? how is it different from "at home" with the father? what are relationships based on there?
- * what becomes of the younger son's apology?
- * how would you feel as the father when he came home?
- * have you ever been in a situation where a source of joy for others was a source of resentment for you?
- * what do you think about verse 31? How does that speak to you?
- * who needs to be forgiven in this story?
- * is there a way in which each character needs forgiveness? how so?
- * with whom you most easily identify? can you identify with the others? with which one are you most reluctant to identify?
- * with which character do you do most readily associate Jesus? can you see him in any of the other characters?
- * how do you think the story ends?
- * if you could re-name the story, what might you call it?
- * What does this story say about what God is like?
- * What does this story say about God's relationship with you?



Rembrandt ,The Prodigal Son in the Tavern, 1635

St. James' Episcopal Church
11815 Seven Locks Road
Potomac, MD 20854
301-762-8040
stjamespotomac.org