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**March 27, 2022**  
**in Lent**

**Fourth Sunday**

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**SCRIPTURE READINGS:**

Joshua 5:9-12  
Psalm 32  
2 Corinthians 5:16-21  
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

**SELECTED READING AND THEME:**

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32  
Eccentric grace

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

In worship today we will hear a story of grace. These words from Frederick Buechner might inform us as we reflect on the story and on what grace looks like:

*'A crucial eccentricity of the Christian faith is the assertion that people are saved by grace. There's nothing **you** have to do. There's nothing you **have** to do. There's nothing you have to **do**.'*

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION**

God of eccentric grace,  
as we come to worship and we enter into the unusual and idiosyncratic,  
where what comes last ends up being first,  
where the table extends to all who turn up,  
and love is served in spades.  
This is where we are called to be.

**Song**      **To God be the Glory (great things He hath done)**

**1<sup>st</sup> Scripture Reading - Barry**

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God of compassion we come to you with open and honest hearts as we think about how we are negotiating what's splendid and what's difficult in our lives.

We get things right, then we get things wrong and that's okay, but not admitting to our wrongdoing can dry out our souls and

create a heartlessness that is damaging to ourselves and those around us. It can lead to callousness when considering how to react to the poor and the excluded, to creating silos of us and them, and easily placing people in the throw away basket.

**Help us become better than this.**

We skip along merrily and then we misstep, we misspeak, and we mishear, and this is ok, as long as we don't pretend our missteps are someone else's fault. Trying to weasel our way out of a situation of our own making by diverting blame is an act that lacks integrity.

**Help us become better than this.**

Make us clear-sighted enough to see when we have made mistakes, make us brave enough to accept when we have behaved badly, and make us willing to set things right.

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

Hear once again these words from Frederick Buechner – *we are saved by grace. There's nothing **we** have to do. There's nothing we **have** to do. There's nothing we have to **do**.* This is God's promise to us and we can rely on it.

## **Second Scripture Reading**

**Song**                      **How Great is our God (if needed)**

## **PRAYER OF ADORATION AND THANKSGIVING**

*Based on 2 Corinthians 5:16-21*

Give thanks to our gracious God, for we are a restored and reconciled people, the old things that have left us shabby, worn and faded have been restored and we are like a new creation. We are no longer judged by what has knocked us about and the wrongs we have done, we are seen in a new light, light that shines on us through the loving friendship of Christ, a friend that is willing to go to the wire to bring us back into right relationship with God and others.

**And so, with gratitude we become representatives of the light, people with the purpose of reconciling all things in all creation together for good. Amen.**

## **Kids Talk – Pat**

## **DISCIPLESHIP THOUGHT**

'There was a man who had two sons', so begins one of the most renowned of Jesus' parables. The older is serious about his birth obligations, he takes his place alongside his father, settles down at home and picks up his responsibilities on the farm. The younger son is an adventurer, a rule breaker who pushes life's edges, looks to frontiers, to what might be on offer in another place, in another life. We can frame this story in the terms of which son makes the right or wrong choices. Perhaps both sons make good decisions, and both make bad ones. In our world we need all kinds of people – those who push for the new and those who care for what they have, and we ourselves need to be adaptable people making different choices at different times according to what we are confronted with. What we hope for is that when we make mistakes and bad choices, as we all will, we are met by the father who is full of compassion, that the short version of this parable is that there was a man who had two sons - and he loved them both, full-stop.

## **OFFERTORY SENTENCE**

Giving is an act of grace, we let go of something that we have received so it might go on to be received and used by another.

## **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

We give these gifts without conditions attached trusting that they will do good in whatever place they land. Amen.

## **Sermon - Michael**

### **PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

**Led by Pam**

*(Hold a period of silence after each sentence)*

Loving God, we come to this time of prayer for our world.

We pray for people, communities and nations living in times of conflict.

We pray for families dealing with disputes, separation, and estrangement.

We pray for people who make poor choices, and all those who bear the consequences of those choices.

We pray for those who are victims of unjust work practices.

We pray for those facing financial hardship.

We pray for those who feel overlooked and excluded.

We pray for those who would be truth-tellers but are silenced.

We pray for those who are displaced from their homes and seeking safe shelter.

There are people known to us that find themselves in the circumstances we have remembered, but we know that there are more who encounter similar situations and we would not limit our concern to a few, we ask that our prayers go deep and wide. Hear our concerns.

**Song Amazing Grace how sweet the sound**

### **COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION**

Go into the day knowing that the grace of God goes with you travelling with you like your shadow – there is nothing you have to do - it is always there.