

**Bible Study**  
**Fourth Sunday in Lent, Year C**  
**March 6, 2016**

**[RCL] Joshua 5:9-12; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32; Psalm 32**

**Joshua 5:9-12**

The Lord tells Joshua in this passage that the disgrace of Egypt has been rolled away from the Israelites, meaning that they no longer carry the lowliness of having been enslaved by the Egyptians. They are free, and they have made it out of the wilderness where they faced scarcity and the fear of not having enough. Now the Israelites are free to eat of the abundance of the fruits of Canaan. Replacing the manna which sustained them for many years with much more pleasing food.

- When was a time or a season of your life that you experienced scarcity?
- What was this experience like?
- When was a time or a season of your life that you experienced abundance?
- How does being in a season of abundance feel different from being in a season of scarcity?

**Psalm 32**

This Psalm is a song of thanksgiving for receiving God's forgiveness. The psalmist tells of the joy of being forgiven, and then encourages others to seek God's forgiveness.

- Tell a story of forgiveness from your own life; a time you forgave or a time you were forgiven.
- How were you changed by forgiveness?
- Why would you encourage others to seek or offer forgiveness based on your own experience?

**2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

This passage from the second letter to the Corinthians offers us another image of reconciliation. Paul says we have been reconciled to God through Christ. Yet, Paul subverts the traditional image of reconciliation, in which the one at fault would seek forgiveness, and tells us that God seeks reconciliation with us. We are thus commissioned a ministry of reconciliation.

- What image of reconciliation does Paul say God offers us as a model for our own ministry of reconciliation?
- What does Paul's subversion of reconciliation tell us about God and our relationship with God?
- How can we, as Christians today, carry on this ministry of reconciliation in the world?

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

This well-known parable tells of two archetypal characters that are found in many stories across many cultures: the dutiful child and the irresponsible child. This story has frustrated real life dutiful children for generations, I'd imagine. But, when we look at this parable in relationship with the other readings appointed for today, we see a common theme: reconciliation. In this

parable, the father lives in a constant posture of readiness to forgive his son if and or when he returns home. This is the same message we see in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians: God is always ready to forgive God's children no matter their indiscretion. It is probably true that most of us act at different times in our lives as both the dutiful and the irresponsible child.

- Tell about a time when you were more the like the "prodigal son."
- Who welcomed you back with open arms?
- What does this parable teach us about how we relate to God? To others?
- What image of forgiveness does this parable offer us for our "ministry of reconciliation"?

*Written by Maggie Foote*

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