

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent  
March 31, 2019  
“Waywardness and Resentment”

Josh 5:9...12

2 Cor 5:17-21

Lk 15:1...32

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We all make mistakes. We all make bad choices. We all do things which shame us and which make us lesser human beings.

One of the worst consequences of mistakes is that they can entrap us. Then, we can see no easy way out of our ensnarement – and we compound the problem by making other bad choices. Sometimes, we fall so low that we feel that there is no hope. This is when many people turn to alcohol, drugs, other self-destructive behaviors – and even suicide!

What is true for our physical and emotional life, is also valid for our spiritual life. Sin is destructive behavior – and it is compounded by our failure to change. However, change can be very hard. We feel trapped. We have a deep sense of shame. We feel we are cut off and that there is no hope.

Nevertheless, we must own up to our sins – We must make amends to those whom we have hurt – We must admit that we are dependent upon others, and that we need their help. (This is why 12-Step Programs were created for people with addictions!)

Both sons in the Gospel parable had serious problems. Yet, only the prodigal recognized the terrible sinfulness in himself. He had been undisciplined – He had had no patience or self-control – He wanted what would be his inheritance in advance – He wanted to enjoy life to the fullest in the here and now. Consequently, he, then, made every mistake imaginable, and became a destitute and pathetic human being.

Fortunately, he finally saw himself clearly. He realized his terrible waywardness. He was desperate just to stay alive. So, he returned, full of shame, sorrow, and remorse, and asked to work and be treated as a hired hand in his father’s employ! We can well imagine his elation and joy at being forgiven and welcomed back as the son he was!

The older, faithful son had an entirely different problem. He harbored a resentment that he never recognized or thought important. He was faithful to his father and he did all that was asked of him. But his underlying resentment came forth when he refused to appreciate or accept his brother's repentance and return. He found it very difficult to be a brother and to love someone who had squandered so much and had become so depraved. Fortunately, the father's love was great enough to reach out and embrace both boys!

Today, St. Paul also teaches us just how much God loves us and the great lengths He has gone to restore us after we have sinned! We have become a whole "new creation" if we have joined ourselves to Christ. Although this happens with our baptism, we must willingly embrace Jesus and his Gospel as we mature.

God has made all this possible through His Son, who, as Jesus, took on our sinful and broken humanity. This sinful and broken condition was embraced by Jesus, and reconciled to God through what Jesus did on the cross. Without resentment or hesitation, Jesus loved us and suffered a death which he did not deserve on behalf of everyone of us!

However, there is a serious obligation incumbent upon us with this restoration. We are to become ambassadors of reconciliation. We must bring the Good News of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness to others – to others caught in the web of sin and self-destructive behavior. We must give them hope. This means that we can never shun or scorn anyone no matter what they have done – or how depraved they might have been. For how can they ever take the first step toward change: if no one is kind to them? – if no one hopes in them? – if no one believes in the possibilities for them?

Brothers and Sisters, perhaps one of the worst sins we can commit is to refuse to forgive our enemies – or those who have done wrong to our loved ones. Yet, how can they be reconciled if we don't open the door for them to God, or to Jesus, through ourselves?

So, let us pray, today, that we can overcome any waywardness in ourselves – And may God deliver us from any resentment we have toward those who have, themselves, gone astray!

Amen.

March 31, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra