



Risen Savior Lutheran Church

14700 Leavenworth Rd., Basehor, KS 66007 913-724-2900

Note the insulting, damning, accusing, mocking words of the Pharisees, **this man, Jesus receives sinners and eats with them.** The grace of God stops short of no one. He welcomes sinners without discrimination, He comes not just for those who try to be good but for the worst.

You may fool others, even fool yourself; but God knows you too well. You haven't honored His Name as you should. You desire pleasures of the flesh and feeding your vanity. You hurt your family and others more than you realize. You aren't content with what He gives you; so you complain like a spoiled child. You go off and squander His goodness. very much a prodigal child.

Then you may wonder "Am I repentant enough?" "Have I shown sufficient regret over sins?" "Am I sorry because what I did or because I got caught?" Questions that likely only to drive you to question your repentance, its sincerity; ultimately whether God has forgiven you.

Know this well: Absolution, forgiveness does not originate from repentance; it originates solely from Christ. The story of the Prodigal Son; a beautiful picture how God treats you. Notice the father embraces the child before he can even get a word out...before he says 'I'm sorry'. Did you notice that? God doesn't receive you back, forgive you based on how well you repent, or because you work to show how sorry you are. Look what the father is doing here- forgiving, welcoming his child back into the family. Notice it's not partial restoration, not conditional or probationary until he proves himself again, no penance needed.

We're all prodigal children. You will never repent sincere enough. Forgiveness, given you here and now, is not earned, strengthened, or made more real by your repentance. Absolution alone upon the work of Jesus on the cross; that you would live in His grace; the entire life of believers is one of repentance, because, the entire life of believers is to live in Christ, whose love always more than enough.

There's a great misconception, among believers, non-believers. People think 'being Christian' means 'being good'. "Look at that person who calls themselves a Christian" The focus for Christians is how we live, making right

decisions. It fills the bestseller list in Christian bookstores. Foremost 'being Christian' means being nice, living right, and behaving. ...They're wrong. 'Being Christian' is kind of the opposite of that. 'Being Christian' -not about being good; it's about 'being a sinner'. Christianity is not centered on good works. Such a false idea will lead to despair or hypocrisy. Sure we should be good, want to do good. All sin is damnable, take it serious; act in love because God's love to us, work on obeying God's law -but 'being Christian' is recognizing you're a sick- need a physician, need to be healed because you keep sinning. Jesus did not come for good people, **He welcomes, receives, sits down, eats with sinners**. To be Christian doesn't mean you have the perfect marriage, model family, whose kids never get in trouble or your family never fights, or that you don't struggle with the same sins over and over again. 'Being Christian' is seeking forgiveness from Christ. Living a repentant life.

Maybe you've heard this quote -"Some men see things as they are and say why; other men see things the way they could be and say why not..." Words made popular John F. Kennedy, later by his brother Robert. Originally the words of George Bernard Shaw in his play *Back to Methuselah*. These words were placed by Shaw into the mouth of the serpent speaking to Eve.

That point is hard on me. Some of us are dreamers. I've been described as a speeding train while the folks around me are cattle grazing on the pasture. By the time they heard the train coming, looked up, the train was gone. I'm not sure if that's a compliment; but I get it. I wrestle with this. Often it seems there's always about 20 things, ideas bouncing around inside. Forgive me for not slowing my mind to always give you my undivided attention.

Now there is nothing wrong with being a dreamer. The world needs dreamers. But how easy to live in dreams and forget the moment, what you have. And this is precisely why it was into the mouth of Satan that Shaw placed these words. Adam and Eve dreamed in the garden, just one quick opportunity to dream of life better than God's perfect will.

The prodigal son, a dreamer. Sin is always rooted in thinking "I know what's best" "God doesn't care if I do this or act like that." "God understands, wants me to be myself, find happiness." Dreams lived out against God's will cause: spouses to break their vows, children to rebel, adults to mistreat others, hurt loved ones, parents to neglect their responsibilities. Like the prodigal son - so often lack contentment, waste what the Father gives, prostitute ourselves with sinful living.

No matter how shamefully we've lived; no matter how disgusting, still our heavenly Father eager to welcome us in His loving embrace. He is not interested in punishing us for our failures. He made His own Son to be sin for us, all our misery and sin and death and nailed it to His cross that He would welcome us. That's how we learn what love is all about. From the cross, there's a place for every prodigal son and daughter eager for healing and restoration. No limits to His love here; His forgiveness, no matter what.

As the unworthy sinner you are; loves you enough not to leave you in your sin and death. As we make our way thru Lent, know God's presence is not tied to what we might try and become but who we are.

So faith is not an escape from reality but the only way to confront the painful reality of sin, guilt, shame, suffering, and death -- of lives filled with joys that will endure – even though our failures and sins and even death seem to win.

We see with eyes not some dreamy utopia of what might be; but Jesus receives none but sinners. Good people are on their own, thus lost.

Live repentant, being Christian, gathered by the Lord Himself, to bask in His forgiving presence in His gracious Word and holy sacraments. Those insulting, damning, accusing, mocking words toward Christ are of greatest comfort for you, **Jesus receives sinners and eats with them.**