

## All Are Reconciled—Be Reconciled

*By Linda Rex*

**March 30, 2025, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Preparation for Easter or Lent**—As we gather on this Sunday during the season of preparation for Easter, we are given the opportunity to consider more deeply our response to the work God is doing in this world through his Son, Jesus Christ. During the time the Son of God was here on earth, he spent time with people from all walks of life, showing care and concern for the suffering, provision for the hungry, and deliverance for those held captive by evil.

Unfortunately, the religious leaders of his day objected to him spending large amounts of time with people they thought he should avoid—tax collectors, prostitutes, and other “sinners”. Jesus responded on one occasion, by telling a story about a son who demanded his inheritance, and who, when he received it, went into a far land, and squandered it on riotous living. When the money ran out, he was left feeding slop to pigs. It was at this point that he came to his senses, and returned home to his father, who had been anxiously awaiting his return. Many of us know and love the story of the prodigal son, and the father who ran to meet him and showered him with a celebration when he returned home. But we often forget that there was another son who was involved in the story (Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32).

The older son is the one who, year after year, faithfully served at home, diligently doing the chores and bearing up under all the burdens of caring for the estate and the animals. When the prodigal returns home, he doesn’t bother to attend the party—he is too upset and angry with his brother and his father. When asked, he reminds his father of how hard he has worked, and that he has never had a party thrown for him. Resentment and bitterness oozes from his words. His father reminds him that, in truth, the older son had received his inheritance as well, and everything already belonged to him. It was only fitting that they rejoice over the one who had lost everything, and had humbly returned to the family fold.

In Jesus’ story, we never hear the end of the parable, whether or not the older son finally gave in and attended the party. In the case of the religious leaders of his day, to whom the parable was directed, they never admitted their error nor came to their senses. They were too busy pointing their fingers at people they believed unworthy of their time and attention. Instead of repenting and turning away from their own errors and sins, they participated, in the end, in the crucifixion of the One who came for their salvation.

In our New Testament reading for this Sunday, 2 Corinthians 5:16–21, the apostle Paul reminds us of how we are to view those we encounter day by day in our lives. In one of the most beautiful expressions of God’s grace to us in Christ, Paul writes that we no longer view people through the lens of their broken, sinful humanity. No, that is all gone now, in our crucified and risen Christ. In Christ, each and every person is a new creation, a new creature. All of the ways in which we categorize people, all the ways we sort people into piles, are all gone in Jesus. He has made all things new, is making all things new, and will one day complete what he has begun when all is made new in the new heaven and earth.

Our God, who is Father, Son, and Spirit, has reconciled the world to himself, and has given to his Church, the ministry of reconciliation. As the Body of Christ, the Church has a calling to voice Jesus’ message to the world—“you are reconciled to God, therefore, be reconciled to God.” God has done all that is needed to make you right with him. Trust him now, and receive and live within that reconciliation, through Jesus in the Spirit. Jesus has gone into the far country, joined us in our pig slop, and brought us home to his Father.

This being the case, we don't want to be like the older son, the party pooper, who refuses to join in the celebration. There is rejoicing in heaven every time a new person turns to Jesus Christ in faith. Instead of being like the grumpy religious leaders of Jesus' day or the resentful older son in Jesus' story, we want to be on the dance floor, line dancing with the music. We want to be sampling the hors d'oeuvres and the cold drinks, and laughing with our friends. We want to be listening to the stories, and reminding the prodigal how far he has come, and how blessed he is. We want to celebrate the wonderful miracle of divine resurrection God has done in our lives and the life of the prodigal, who is forgiven, accepted, and beloved, just as we are, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen and amen.

*Dear Father, forgive us when we forget all you have done for us, and become unforgiving and critical of others. Remind us, Lord, to be as forgiving and generous to others, as you have been so generously forgiving to us. Awaken us to the spiritual renewal you are actively bringing about by your Spirit in each person we see. May we celebrate this miracle with you each day. Amen.*

*"Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* 2 Corinthians 5:16–21 NASB

*"How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord'; and You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah. 'I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you.' Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but he who trusts in the Lord, lovingkindness shall surround him. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart."* Psalm 32 NASB