



Holy Family Parish Northeast Mallee

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Website: northeastmallee.org.au

Incorporating the Communities of St Mary's Sea Lake, Sacred Heart Culgoa,
St Joseph's Nandaly, S's Peter & Paul Quambatook & St Mary's Swan Hill
as well as the Lake Boga Families & Faith Group



30TH MARCH 2025:

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

A MAN HAD TWO SONS

When we think about the two sons in this parable, we often begin by contrasting them against one another. This means we can fall into the mistake of thinking they are polar opposites. True, their story arcs are quite different, but if you think for a moment about what is driving them to act as they do, you will begin to see that both of them are acting out of the same false identity. Both brothers had forgotten the truth that they were beloved sons of their father and instead had fallen for the lie that they were slaves toiling for a master.

Both brothers then act out of this lie in their own way.

Perhaps the younger brother's reaction is more obvious; he *rebels*. In his mind, the only difference between himself and his father's servants is the promise of an inheritance. And so, refusing to wait for his father's death, he simply demands this inheritance, cuts ties and flees all responsibilities. In his mind, he has shaken off the chains of servitude, and for a while, he thinks he is happy. It is only when he hits absolute rock bottom that he *begins* to understand what he has lost. He resolves to head back home, but this time he is ready to accept his place as a servant. At least as a servant he will have some food in his belly. And of course, we know what he experiences on return; his father runs to him so that he can embrace his son. The son blurts out his rehearsed line, but the father simply ignores the bit about 'treat me as one of your servants.' How could a loving father see his son in this way? The son may have fallen for the lie, but the father never did. He only ever sees a son to be loved. That is why he had been yearning for him all along.

And so what of the older son? When he hears of his brother's return, he refuses to come inside. For the second time that day, the father leaves his home and goes out to meet one of his sons. I'm sure you've noticed before how the older son refuses to name the younger as his brother, instead calling him 'This son of yours.' But have you also noticed how he refuses to name his father as *Father*? Nowhere in the parable will he say this. And this points us to his own mistaken identity; the older brother has also fallen for the lie that he is a slave. He is suffering from the same wound as his younger brother, except for him, instead of leading to rebellion, it has led to *resentment*. He resents being at home. He resents his father. Just like his younger brother, he also falsely believes that the only difference between himself and his father's servants is the promise of an inheritance. He is resigned to grudgingly toil away until he 'gets what is his,' while all the way he is unable to truly recognise himself as a son. And how does his father react? With patient gentleness and understanding. The father calls him by the name he has rejected; he calls him 'my son.' We don't hear how the story ends, and that is deliberate. Jesus leaves is open so that the question is thrown back on his hearers; will you accept you identity as sons and daughters? Will you come in to the Father's House? And that question is also directed towards us.

There is a bit of each brother in all of us. A bit of rebellion towards God, and if we are honest, a bit of resentment too. Identifying with the younger brother is maybe a little easier. It is a comfort to knowing that we can always return to the Father's merciful embrace. But perhaps we are much more hesitant to recognise the older brother in ourselves. I know I was. *(Sorry, I ran out of space, reflection continued inside...)*

Parish Contact Details:

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Office Hrs: Tues, Wed and Fri 10:30 -1.30

Parish Priest

Fr James Kerr

Parish Office:

Glenda Klabbers & Mary Kennedy

Child Protection Officers:

Tony and Joelle Whiting

Child Safe Church

Here in the Parish of Holy Family North East Mallee we follow the Child Safe Standards outlined by the Victorian Government and we also implement procedures and standards as directed by the Ballarat Diocesan Office.



**PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS
RECENT DEATHS+**

ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH

Greg McKerrow, Mary Lloyd, Patricia Jackson
Vince Carpinteri, Vincenzo Fazzalori, Sr Dawn Power.
Bernard (Bernie) Ryan, Martin Walsh, Vittoria
Guarneri Mathilda Lariche, Catherine Irwin,
Mary Nolen, Peter Mullan, Kathleen Meehan
Mary Considine, Leo Clohesy, Leonard McLoughlan
Fred Lawry, Paul Pupillo, Betty Currie, John O'Bryan

SICK LIST

Pope Francis, Pat Hoare, Maureen Allen, Pat Croft,
Yvonne Richardson, Paul Donohue, Jayden Williams,
Margaret Foott, Jarrod Crimmins, Michael Bourke,
Jack Donohue, Jude Lewis, Bridget Phyland,
Carmel Ryan, Peter Amezdroz, Ken Duryea,
Helen Duryea

THIS WEEKEND 30TH MARCH 2025

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

Sat 6pm Swan Hill
Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL

Tues: 10am Mass
Wednesday: 10am Mass
Thursday: Confessions 5pm,
5.30pm Mass, Adoration
Friday: 11:30am Mass
Confessions 5:30pm
Stations of the Cross 6pm

Saturday: 9:30am Confessions, Mass 10am

NEXT WEEKEND 6TH APRIL

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

Saturday 6pm Swan Hill
Sunday 8.30am Sea Lake
Sunday 10.30am Swan Hill

FRONT PAGE REFLECTION CONTINUED...

When I first heard the suggestion that I could be carrying the same wound, I put up a wall and thought 'no way, he's the bad guy of the story. I know my Father loves me.' But the point of the story is not to judge our attitudes; the merciful Father shows us this so clearly. No, the point is not to judge, but to shine a light. The Father wants us to know his love ever more deeply. And sometimes that means he needs to help us bring some of our attitudes and mistaken identities into the light so that he might heal those wounds. It might be that overall, you are ready to embrace your identity as a daughter or son, but maybe there is a particular aspect of your life, of what you are feeling asked to do or to endure that is breeding resentment or rebellion. Well, *be like the older brother*. Be honest with your loving Father. Name what you are feeling in prayer, so that he might bring his light and his truth into that place of hurt. We have nothing to fear in being honest with our Father.

NOTICES

BAPTISM WELCOME

We welcome Gabriella, daughter of Jim and Angela and Loki, son of and Jayden and Sophie as they are presented for Baptism into God's family, the Church. May God bless you always and keep you in his care!

CUPPA AFTER MASS NEXT SUNDAY



ROSARY

This Saturday 5th April after the 10am Mass will be at the home of Joe and Teresa Taverna, 109 Werrill St. All welcome.

EXTRA TIMES FOR RECONCILIATION

As well as Thursday evening 5pm, Reconciliation will also be available this week Friday at 5:30pm and Saturday at 9:30am.

Our Parish Schools

St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake

Principal: Kate Nunn
47 Hannon Street, Sea Lake
Ph: 03 5070 1272

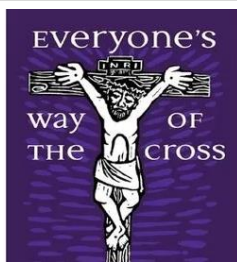
St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill

Principal: Kate Quin
2 Murlong St Swan Hill
Ph. 03 5033 2541

St Mary MacKillop College

Principal: Michelle Haeusler
53 McCrae Street, Swan Hill
Ph: 5032 9771

principal@smswanhill.catholic.edu.au



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Fridays of Lent 6pm St Marys Swan Hill.

LITTLE ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR LENT

Set the table for dinner without being asked.
(Philippians 2:14 – "Do everything without grumbling.")

Pick up litter around your neighbourhood or a park.
(Genesis 2:15 – "God took the man and put him in the garden to take care of it.")

Say something kind to someone who looks sad today.
(Proverbs 12:25 – "Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.")

Let someone else go first in line or on the swings.
(Mark 9:35 – "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last.")

Help clean up after a meal, even if it's not your mess.
(Galatians 6:2 – "Carry each other's burdens.")

Offer to pray for a friend who is having a tough time.
(James 5:16 – "Pray for each other.")

Bake muffins or bread and take them to the fire or police station to thank the workers. (Luke 10:27 – "Love your neighbour as yourself.")

Simple Prayer: Jesus, help us be a light for others through kindness and love. Amen.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT?

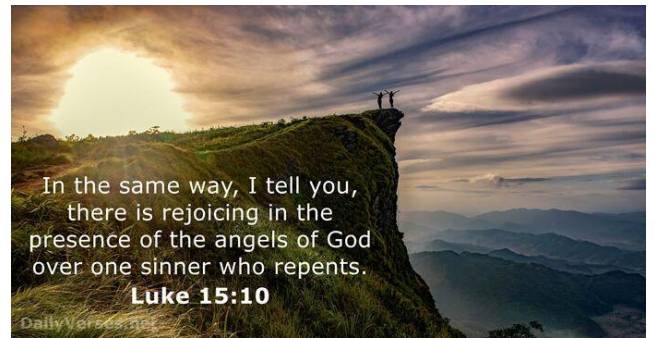
Why were Jesus' actions of welcoming and dining with sinners so scandalous?

In what way is the parable a response to the accusation of the Pharisees and scribes?

Which aspects of the story could be regarded as 'unpredictable' or out of the ordinary expectation?

How might the original audience have expected the father to react to his son's homecoming?

When have you ever felt like one of the characters from this parable?



GOSPEL COMMENTARY BY MARY COLOE PBVM

Today's Gospel parable is so familiar that in fact we may miss the point of Jesus' story. Did you ever realise that the point of the parable is not the younger son who wastes his father's money? This first story sets the scene for the introduction of the second son, the older 'stay-at-home' brother. To understand this parable takes notice of the context. Jesus is at a meal surrounded by tax collectors and sinners, people just like the younger son. The good, religious people of Jesus' time are scandalised by this behaviour. They complain about Jesus' dinner companions. The parable is directed to them. They are like the older son in the story. Their lives have been faithful to their Jewish Law and now Jesus, apparently a man of God, spends more time with outcasts and sinners. 'What about us?' they complain.

But notice how they miss the point. The older son has been living a sterile life, not really in relationship with this father. He has been like a 'slave' and he distances himself from his father and his brother – 'this son of yours'. Even though he stayed at home, his relationships are dead. It is the younger son who discovers a living and loving father when he knows he doesn't deserve one.

The father's love is a gift. Neither son earns it, nor deserves it. God's love is like this – totally, even irrationally, given. This is the love that Jesus reveals as he lives out God's welcome to all. The father in the parable welcomes both sons and invites both to join the celebration. We are all freely invited into the reign of God, but we cannot be choosy about our table companions. © Mary Coloe

READINGS NEXT WEEK:

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

Second Reading: Philippians 3:8-14

Gospel: John 8:1-11

FIRST READING Joshua 5:9-12

A reading from the book of Joshua

The people of God went to the promised land and there kept the passover.

The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have taken the shame of Egypt away from you.'

The Israelites pitched their camp at Gilgal and kept the Passover there on the fourteenth day of the month, at evening in the plain of Jericho. On the morrow of the Passover they tasted the produce of that country, unleavened bread and roasted ears of corn, that same day. From that time, from their first eating of the produce of that country, the manna stopped falling. And having manna no longer, the Israelites fed from that year onwards on what the land of Canaan yielded.

The Word of the Lord. ALL: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 33:2-7. R. v.9

(R.) Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

I will bless the Lord at all times,
his praise always on my lips;
in the Lord my soul shall make its boast.
The humble shall hear and be glad.

Glorify the Lord with me.

Together let us praise his name.

I sought the Lord and he answered me;
from all my terrors he set me free.

Look towards him and be radiant;
let your faces not be abashed.

This poor man called; the Lord heard him
and rescued him from all his distress. **(R.)**

SECOND READING 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians
God reconciled us to himself through Christ.

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on his reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

The Word of the Lord. ALL: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Luke 15:18

Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
I will rise and go to my Father and tell him:
Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.
Praise and honour to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL Luke 15:1-3. 11-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

Your brother here was dead and has come to life.

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them:

'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me." So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. 'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening."

'The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found.'" *The Gospel of the Lord.*

ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ