

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.  
May we together experience the presence of God*

+++++

## **We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord**

### **Prelude**

### **Welcome**



### **“Gathered up in Jesus” Worship series**

### **Week 4**

### **Announcements/Joys & Concerns**

The gospel text for this fourth Sunday in the season of Lent is a familiar story. We call it the Prodigal Son, or sometimes the Loving Father. But it is a story about wanting and searching for what seems lost but is always within reach if we know how to look.

This story reminds us how hard it is to be as gracious as God seems to be, at least as Jesus describes the love of the creator. Like the older brother, we are reluctant. We aren't sure he's learned his lesson; we aren't sure she's paid her dues yet. We hold back from the party that Jesus wants to throw for every soul that wanders into the fellowship of the church.

That God has a heart for those who are lost is undeniable. The question is whether we do. Yes, we can focus on how we are lost like the prodigal, whether in big ways or small. But we should also focus on how we go about doing the welcoming. Whom do we include, whom do we invite, whom do we gaze off down the road in hopes that they might show their face and then go running to bring them in? Are we, who have been gathered up, ready to gather those who are still out from under the loving shelter of God's winged grace?

### **GATHERING WORDS/CALL TO WORSHIP (inspired by Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)**

*Written by Roddy Hamilton, and posted on Mucky Paws, <http://www.nkchurch.org.uk/index.php/mucky-paws>. Reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2016/02/prayer-reflection-return-luke-15.html>.*

let this be the welcoming place

the place of return

**and let it be built by a love**

**that bends towards those who return here**

for it is a love that has been waiting  
like a candle in the window  
ever lighting the way back  
and never willing to let go  
the hope that each child  
will return home  
**let it be the place where  
the only appropriate response  
to love that has come to the end of its longing  
is to kill the fatted calf,  
feast and celebrate  
send up balloons  
and prepare the party  
for that which has been lost  
has returned to be among us  
once more**

**Opening Prayer  
(inspired by Luke 15:1-3, 11-32)**

*Written by Ann Siddall, in Lent to Easter liturgies: Year C. Posted on the website of the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre, <https://stillpointsa.org.au>. Reposted: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/02/prayer-prodigal-son.html>.*

**Father, it was said of the Prodigal Son that he “came to himself.”  
Help us to wake up to ourselves, and to You.  
Set us free from the illusion of trying to be perfect  
so that we might be more fully human.  
Help us not to chase after an imaginary life,  
and to find satisfaction in our real lives.  
And turn us away from our self-rejection  
so that we might see that Your arms open in welcome. Amen.**

**\*HYMN OF PRAISE, UMH #339      “Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast”**

Author: Charles Wesley© 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #736621-A. All rights reserved. "Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #736621-A. All rights reserved

**Come, sinners, to the gospel feast;  
let every soul be Jesus' guest.  
Ye need not one be left behind,  
for God hath bid all humankind.**

**Sent by my Lord, on you I call;  
the invitation is to all.  
Come, all the world! Come, sinner, thou!  
All things in Christ are ready now.**

**Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,  
ye restless wanderers after rest;  
ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind,**

**in Christ a hearty welcome find.**

**My message as from God receive;  
ye all may come to Christ and live.  
O let his love your hearts constrain,  
nor suffer him to die in vain.**

**This is the time, no more delay!  
This is the Lord's accepted day.  
Come thou, this moment, at his call,  
and live for him who died for all.**

## **We Hear God's Word**

**Gospel Reading.....** Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

**New Revised Standard Version**

### **The Parable of the Lost Sheep**

*15 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.*

*2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,  
"This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."*

*3 So he told them this parable:*

### **The Parable of the Prodigal and His Brother**

*11 Then Jesus[a] said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with[b] the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'[c] 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.*

*25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For*

*all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" 31 Then the father[d] said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"*

The Word of God for the People of God, **Thanks be to God!**

## **CHILDREN'S SERMON**

### **FAITH HYMN UMH #378 "Amazing Grace"**

Amazing Grace © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #736621-A. All rights reserved. "Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #736621-A. All rights reserved

**1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
was blind, but now I see.**

**2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved;  
how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed.**

**3. Through many danger, toils, and snares, I  
have already come;  
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.**

**4. The Lord has promised good to me, his  
word my hope secures;  
he will my shield and portion be,  
as long as life endures.**

**5. Yeah when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
and mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
a life of joy and peace.**

**6. When we've been there ten thousand  
years, bright shining as the sun,  
we've no less days to sing God's praise  
than when we'd first begun.**

### **"Message"**

#### **PRAYER – WE ARE PRODIGAL (Luke 15:11-32)**

O God, just as there is a bit of the prodigal in each person, the elder brother from the parable is too often present in the church. It is no secret that some people hesitate to join church because of the ways that some of us have treated newcomers.

Forgive us, Lord, for our lack of hospitality toward strangers.

Forgive us, Lord, for any ways that we make it difficult for new people to find comfortable space in our congregation.

Forgive us, Lord, for jealousy and infighting.

Teach us, Lord, how to receive people whose sins haven't been made public.

Teach us, Lord, how to make our circles large enough to include others.

Teach us, Lord, how to love each other beyond any faults we may see.

Help us rejoice anew as we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray, Our Father...

### **Departing Hymn UMH #2151 "I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me "**

African American Spiritual © 2003 Abingdon Press, all rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #736621-A. All rights reserved. "Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #736621-A. All rights reserved

**1 I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,  
I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,  
I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,  
singing glory, hallelujah, Jesus lifted me.**

**2 Satan had me bound, Jesus lifted me,  
Satan had me bound, Jesus lifted me,  
Satan had me bound, Jesus lifted me,  
singing glory, hallelujah, Jesus lifted me.**

**3 When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,  
When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,  
When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,  
singing glory, hallelujah! Jesus lifted me.**

**4 I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,  
I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,  
I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,  
singing glory, hallelujah, Jesus lifted me.**

**Repeat verse 4**

### **A BENEDICTION FOR LENT**

May the God of Grace and Glory  
go with you as you follow this Lenten path.  
Wherever it takes you,  
and to whomever it takes you,  
may you go with the blessing of God the Father,  
God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,  
both now and forever. Amen.

**\*POSTLUDE**