

## Bible Tuesday for Lent IV, 2019

Joshua 5:9-12

<sup>9</sup>The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal<sup>[a]</sup> to this day.<sup>10</sup> While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the Passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup>On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. <sup>12</sup>The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Joshua and the Israelites have completed their wilderness wandering and are camped near the Jordan River, opposite Jericho. God is preparing them to enter Canaan and repossess it. None of the Israelite males born during the wilderness wandering have been circumcised. However, in order to enter the Promised Land, God commands that all males be circumcised since circumcision is the outward sign of a Jewish male's fealty to the covenant with God. It is unclear whether the "disgrace of Egypt" was that the males were not circumcised, or that there was disgrace in being slaves.

"Gilgal" is a stylized word based on the Hebrew word for "rolling".

The final step of preparation for entering the Promised Land is the celebration of Passover. Since the Israelites are now out of the wilderness and able to hunt, gather, and soon farm, manna and quail. Instead, the Israelites feast on the food they provide for themselves and recount the amazing story of their ancestors' escape from Egypt which God wrought through plagues and pleas.

Psalms 32

Of David. A Maskil.

<sup>1</sup>Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

<sup>2</sup>Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

<sup>3</sup>While I kept silence, my body wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup>For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up<sup>[a]</sup> as by the heat of summer.*Selah*

<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not hide my iniquity;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.*Selah*

<sup>6</sup>Therefore let all who are faithful

offer prayer to you;  
at a time of distress,<sup>[b]</sup> the rush of mighty waters  
shall not reach them.

- <sup>7</sup> You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. *Selah*
- <sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- <sup>9</sup> Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
else it will not stay near you.
- <sup>10</sup> Many are the torments of the wicked,  
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.
- <sup>11</sup> Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,  
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

This psalm is attributed to King David, specifically after he stole Bathsheba from her husband, Uriah, and had Uriah killed on the battlefield. Verses 3-4 describe the psalmist in deep distress with a guilty conscience. Once the psalmist confesses, God's grace forgives (though in the case of David and Bathsheba, there are certain and dire consequences to David's sin). The psalmist goes on to praise God for God's amazing grace, and to admonish and adjure all Israel to confess their sins to God.

*Selah* – Hebrew scholars do not know what this word means. It could be a word indicating a musical interlude in the song/psalm or it could be an indication of some kind of refrain that was not written down, like “fa la la”.

II Corinthians 5:16-21

<sup>16</sup> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view;<sup>[a]</sup> even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view,<sup>[b]</sup> we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,<sup>[c]</sup> not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

“We regard no one from a human point of view...” – Prior to this passage, Paul teaches that since all have died with Jesus (through baptism into Jesus), and all are raised with Jesus, now all are both spiritual beings as well as human beings. Christians are to treat each other as forgiven, resurrected people, alive in Christ. Through Jesus, our mortal human-ness is remade into what we would be if we never sinned. We are no longer condemned under the law, condemned to eternal death.

My question for Paul is, how does that change how we treat one another? It sounds like Paul very much wants that to change things, but how? Certainly, “be kind to one another, tender

hearted, forgiving each other as God in Christ has forgiven you.” Is Paul thinking of something beyond this?

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” <sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable:

“There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> He would gladly have filled himself with <sup>[c]</sup> the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> 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! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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.’ <sup>[d]</sup> <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes; you killed the fatted calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup> Then the father <sup>[e]</sup> said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> 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.’”

This is well known and beloved parable from Jesus. As such, it has been used to illustrate many lessons, and because it is a great parable, it lends itself to that. When reading such well known Bible passages as this, it is important to ground one’s self in why this Bible passage was originally spoken and what it meant to its original audience.

This section of the gospel of Luke is a series of three parables which are told to the Pharisees and scribes by Jesus because they were kvetching about him. It is not Jesus teaching to which they object, but rather Jesus’ associates. As I stated last week, folks who were sick or poor in

Jesus' day were believed to be living out punishment from God for something they or their parents did. This belief relieves one of guilt for not helping them since "they are getting what they deserve." When the poor or sick start doing things to survive, such as begging, prostitution, or working as a leather tanner or a butcher, jobs which were considered unclean, they were shunned by the respectable people in society, most especially by the religious leaders. Jesus broke many social norms by not only talking to these people but actually eating with them and taking them on as disciples! This was especially true of the tax collectors, since they were employees of Rome, the occupying power, and they paid themselves by over collecting from their fellow Jews.

When the Pharisees and scribes criticize Jesus for associating with these unclean sinners, Jesus responds with three parables: lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. The gospel of Luke is the only one to have these parables. All of them are meant to show the nature of God in relation to the lost, the shunned, the "sinner".

The first two parables are very brief, couple of lines, which begin with "Which of you..." and "What woman..." These are meant to draw in the Pharisees and scribes, to solicit compassion from them. The last parable, the one above commonly called the parable of "The prodigal son" is different. It is meant to show the Pharisees and scribes their place in the Kingdom of God, as well as the place of the sinners. God is the father in this story. The scribes and Pharisees are the older brother, and the tax collectors and unclean people are the younger brother. Does this mean that Jesus agrees with the label of "sinner" that the Pharisees and scribes so liberally use? Not necessarily. Jesus is speaking to them about their perceptions and their grumblings. The parable is meant to draw in self-righteous folks to gain perspective on God's grace as Jesus practices it.