



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church  
[www.trinitylutheran.ca](http://www.trinitylutheran.ca)

---

March 30, 2025  
*4th Sunday in Lent*

### **Announcements**

**Juice boxes** are still needed at Street Help Shelter. The Welcome Centre Shelter for Women needs granola bars, fruit rollup-type items and another snack item for snack packs for children at the centre. Please leave donated items on the table in the Narthex.

### **Coming Up**

**Mark your calendars** for April 12. The second in the Trinity Arts concert series begins at 4 p.m. The concert will feature the Woodward String Quartet from the Detroit Symphony. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students. Spread the word, invite family and friends. A reception follows the concert. Proceeds support our Music Outreach Program.

**Midweek Holden Services** will be part of our Lenten Season. The informal services will take place in the Fellowship Hall Wednesdays until April 16. There will be a simple meal of soup and bread at 5 p.m. and the service will begin at 6 p.m.

### **We Remember in our Prayers**

**In Residence:** Cordelle

**Members:** Bunny, Donna, Ed, Joan, Susan, Connie, Brenda

**Friends & Family:** Anna, Asdis, Audrey, Dot, Jean, Ken, Mary, Randy, Roger, Rose, Frank, Tanya, Nash, Jeff

**Thames Area Clergy:** Rev. Stephen Gross, Interim Pastor, Trinity, London

### **Introduction to the day**

*The psalm sets the tone this day: "Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!" Happy are those who have "become the righteousness of God" in the merits of Christ Jesus. Happy are those for whom the forgiveness of God has "rolled away . . . the disgrace" of former times. Happy is the father at the return of his prodigal son. Happy are we that our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. Rejoice!*

## Hymns

ACS #1018 Deep Peace

ELW #779 Amazing Grace

ELW #666 What wondrous love is this

ELW #319 O Lord, throughout these 40 days

## Prayer of the day

God of compassion, you welcome the wayward, and you embrace us all with your mercy. By our baptism clothe us with garments of your grace, and feed us at the table of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**AMEN**

## First reading 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 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.

## Psalm: 32

<sup>1</sup> Happy are they whose transgressions <sup>1</sup> are forgiven, and whose sin is <sup>1</sup> put away!

<sup>2</sup> **Happy are they to whom the Lord im- <sup>1</sup> putes no guilt, and in whose spirit there <sup>1</sup> is no guile!**

<sup>3</sup> While I held my tongue, my bones with- <sup>1</sup> ered away, because of my groaning <sup>1</sup> all day long.

<sup>4</sup> **For your hand was heavy upon me <sup>1</sup> day and night; my moisture was dried up as in the <sup>1</sup> heat of summer.**

<sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not con- <sup>1</sup> ceal my guilt.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." Then you forgave me the guilt <sup>1</sup> of my sin.

**<sup>6</sup> Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in <sup>1</sup> time of trouble;**

**when the great waters overflow, they <sup>1</sup> shall not reach them.**

<sup>7</sup> You are my hiding-place; you preserve <sup>1</sup> me from trouble;

you surround me with shouts <sup>1</sup> of deliverance.

**<sup>8</sup> “I will instruct you and teach you in the way that <sup>1</sup> you should go;**

**I will guide you <sup>1</sup> with my eye.**

<sup>9</sup> Do not be like horse or mule, which have no <sup>1</sup> understanding;

who must be fitted with bit and bridle, or else they will <sup>1</sup> not stay near you.”

**<sup>10</sup> Great are the tribulations <sup>1</sup> of the wicked;**

**but mercy embraces those who trust <sup>1</sup> in the Lord.**

<sup>11</sup> Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice <sup>1</sup> in the Lord;

shout for joy, all who are <sup>1</sup> true of heart.

**Second reading: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

<sup>16</sup> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, 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, 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.

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

<sup>1</sup> Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] <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: <sup>11b</sup> “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 travelled 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 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>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 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.’”

## **Sermon**

### **Prodigal Love**

Last week, we heard Luke’s story about Jesus calling on the people to repent so that their hearts were always prepared for when the inevitable occurs.

Repentance ... as Jesus taught ... meant to change one’s mind, soul and heart. Repentance fuels a transformation within a person and within a person’s relationships with God and neighbour.

The parable of the Prodigal Son is about how repentance allows love to flow freely ... shaping and transforming relationships and the rules the world tries to impose upon us.

Before Jesus offers the parable, he is questioned by the Pharisees and the scribes about his allowing tax collectors and sinners to hear his teachings and even worst ... sharing meals with them. The religious leaders were upset about such outcasts and unclean persons being allowed to mingle with others who have gathered ... the leaders believe the invitation should be exclusive to those who properly follow tradition and ritual.

Jesus tells the gathering that a man's younger son demands that his father give him his expected inheritance. This ... by the way ... is a monumental sign of disrespect toward the father. It's the same as if the son had said "I wish you were dead!"

The father doesn't argue with the son ... he just divvies up his assets between his two sons. The elder son remains silent through his brother's demands and his father's actions.

Apparently, the elder son is OK with the way things turned out.

The younger son takes his new-found wealth and leaves for distant parts ... separating himself from his family.

Jesus tells the people that the younger son squanders his wealth on "dissolute" living. A different translation of the original Greek passage calls it "chaotic living." That seems like a more unforgiving life ... one that actively wounds a person.

Things get so bad that the son is forced to humiliate himself to survive.

Gentile farmer puts him to work with the swine herd ... a herd of animals that Moses declared as unclean. The son is so desperate that he is willing to eat the same food as the pigs.

In the field ... in his desperation ... the younger son has an epiphany ... when he "came to himself" is how Jesus puts it.

The son decides that his only future is back with his family. He knows that his demands ... the way he left ... and the way he wasted his inheritance means he cannot live as a son. BUT

maybe his father would hire him to work the fields.

The son knows there are specific words and practices that are expected when he meets his father.

On the journey back, the son rehearses the statements ... running through the words ... step by step ... word by word ... "Father I have sinned against heaven and before you." ... until he knew them by heart.

"I am no longer worthy to be your son."

When he gets back to his father's land ... these were the only things he was able to blurt out before his father's actions cut him off.

His father sees the younger son approaching and runs to him ... embraces him ... holding him tightly ... and kissed him in joy.

He calls for a robe ... a ring ... and sandals for the son. All mark his reconciliation with the family and community.

The robe carries marks that identify the son and his family ... the ring grants authority and access to possessions and the sandals symbolizes a return to status for the son.

It's time to celebrate! It's time to call the neighbours to share a meal to mark the younger son's return to the family and to the community. The father tells the slaves to kill a fatted calf ... the prodigal son ... the "wasteful" son has returned.

In the joy of the younger son's return, the elder son feels anger and resentment.

He refuses to be part of the community's celebration.

The elder son has remained on the farm ... working ... when his father dies, he will receive the inheritance ... which, according to the inheritance rules of the time, was roughly twice what the younger brother received. AND his younger brother had squandered his inheritance on prostitutes!

The elder son has done everything right ... everything he was supposed to do ... everything he was expected to do ... BUT his father never celebrated his presence ... never gave him even a young goat for a feast with friends.

Now, the elder son is doing exactly what his brother had done earlier.

He separates himself from the family by refusing to take part in the joyous gathering ... making a demand of his father for his own celebration and for those things ... the robe, the ring and sandals ... that had just been given to his brother.

The elder son is now a prodigal son. Now, he is the prodigal son.

Jesus invites listeners to sit with the three characters in the parable ... we can sit with the younger brother in the mess he made of his life and the desperation he feels standing out among the swine. Remembering the times we have made bad choices and have lost our way.

We can stand with the elder son ... not being recognized for doing everything right and living the expected life only to end up with hurt feelings.

When we allowed emotions to get in the way.

Or we can sit with the father ... having extraordinary demands placed on us and still ignoring the pull of money and offering judgement-free love and living into grace.

The father breaks a lot of society's rules to demonstrate his love for his sons.

He ignores inheritance laws by doling out each son's inheritance of land and possessions while he is still alive. He also allows the younger son to sell the inheritance, so he has a measure of wealth when he leaves for parts unknown.

The father's show of emotion ... his running and embracing his son ... was contrary to the way a father was expected to act. In fact, the father's decision to leave the celebration to bring the elder son back was also against society's expectations of the day.

While the elder son was doing everything right, the father was doing everything wrong ... according to the world. By the world's standards, he was wasting his love on the wrong person. Still, his abundant love overwhelmed such thoughts.

Adam Copeland, a director at Luther Seminary, has a great line about the parable's meaning.

He wrote that the son's "prodigal spending has been overtaken by prodigal loving."

"...overtaken by prodigal loving."  
What a fantastic description.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul makes it clear that reconciliation is God's action in the world and that love is the driving force of reconciliation.

Reconciliation opens the way for prodigal loving ... we see that with the overwhelming love shown by the father this morning.

As we spend the remaining weeks of the Lenten Season ... as we draw ever nearer to the cross and tomb ... perhaps we can sit with this idea of "prodigal loving."

Are we allowing the world's or the community's expectations to keep us from sharing the abundant unconditional love that we have received? Are we willing to embrace those who have returned from a personal journey ... without judgment and questions ... and only with love?

Or do we only love those who do the right things ... those who are easy to love?

If we do this, then it cheapens the grace we have received. Grace calls us to stand with others in their pain and suffering. To be with them in those messy places.

We are called to love all ... friend and stranger alike ... and to love them abundantly.

That is the gift we have received through the cross ... a love that is wasted when we refuse to embrace all with the same joy as the father this morning.

The joy in knowing that the lost have been found ... even when it is us.

**AMEN**

### **Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever.

**AMEN**

### **Blessing**

May God who has called us forth from the dust of the earth, and claimed us as children of the light, strengthen you on your journey into life renewed.

The Lord bless you and keep you,  
The Lord's face shine upon you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favour and give you + peace.

**AMEN**

**TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE PROGRAM**

**AUTHORIZATION**

I hereby authorize **Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church**, 1215 Parent Avenue, Windsor, ON N8X 4J1, to cause a cheque to be drawn on my account, each month as a contribution by me to Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, as follows:

Total **monthly** contributions to Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of:

\_\_\_\_\_ (\$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00) per month  
Distributed as follows:

Current Giving/Benevolence	\$ _____	per month
Global Hunger and Development Agency (GHDA)	\$ _____	per month
Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR)	\$ _____	per month
ELCIC World Missions/Volunteers in Mission	\$ _____	per month
Specify _____	\$ _____	per month
Specify _____	\$ _____	per month
Specify _____	\$ _____	per month
Total Monthly Giving:	\$ _____	per month

Contributor's name \_\_\_\_\_ Envelope # \_\_\_\_\_

Bank/Trust/Credit Union Name \_\_\_\_\_

Branch Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Account Number \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Account \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

***This authority may be changed or cancelled by the contributor at any time.***

To ensure accuracy, a sample cheque marked "VOID" must accompany this form.

The transfer of contributions to the ministry of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church will begin in the month *following* receipt of this authorization.