

livingtheword

www.livingtheword.org.nz

Hearing and Living the Sunday Readings

Reading 1 [Ex 32:7-11, 13-14](#)

The LORD said to Moses,
"Go down at once to your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, for they have become depraved. They have soon turned aside from the way I pointed out to them, making for themselves a molten calf and worshipping it, sacrificing to it and crying out, 'This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!' "I see how stiff-necked this people is," continued the LORD to Moses. Let me alone, then, that my wrath may blaze up against them to consume them. Then I will make of you a great nation."

But Moses implored the LORD, his God, saying,
"Why, O LORD, should your wrath blaze up against your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with such great power and with so strong a hand? Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and how you swore to them by your own self, saying, 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; and all this land that I promised, I will give your descendants as their perpetual heritage.'" So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.

Gospel [Lk 15:1-32](#) or [15:1-10](#)

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." So to them he addressed this parable.

"What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.

"Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.' In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Reflection Process / Questions

- **5 mins Reading** - underline a word or idea that strikes you
 - **5 mins Writing** - write what you have heard, write your response to a reflection question(s) that attracts your attention
 - **5 mins Sharing / Praying** - share with a friend or pray to God about livingtheword you have heard.
-
- Turning to God and receiving God's forgiveness is at the centre of the readings this week. In the first reading God has just revealed his 'name' and 'face' to Moses and given Israel guidelines for their living (10 Commandments). Israel is pictured as restless. They have been waiting for Moses to reveal God to them. They give up waiting. They want something 'visible'. They make an 'idol' of a golden calf - an ancient symbol of fertility, life, fruitfulness. God's love and tenderness meets human rebellion. Have you had an experience of 'waiting' for God? Did you decide to make a 'calf' instead? Is there anything today you are 'waiting' for God to show you? Have you taken the time to listen to his 'word' or sought the advice of a 'Moses' whom God wishes to speak through? Who is a Moses figure you could go to?
 - The second reading is omitted so as to focus upon the Parable of Mercy - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son. Jesus is seeking to shatter a human misunderstanding and image of God. Who would go after 1 lost sheep and leave 99? Who would tip upside down a house to find 1 coin? Who would welcome home without question a son who wished

Then he said,
"A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, 'Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.' So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any.

Coming to his senses he thought,
'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."' So he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.' Then the celebration began.

Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns, who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.'

He said to him,
'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'

- his Father dead and totally disgraced the family in public?! The Father is an image of what God is truly like - wanting to find whoever is lost, and embracing with forgiveness all who have sinned. What 'image' of God do you have in your heart and mind from your family and religious experience? What fresh image or new understanding attracts you in Luke 15?
- Tax Collectors and Sinners were excited but Pharisees and Scribes were complaining. The religious issue was who does God 'include' and welcome into the heavenly 'banquet' (heaven). Some could not accept Jesus' inclusivity as it turned their religious world-view 'upside down'. What is the deep reason the older son wants to exclude his younger brother? Is this attitude present in your life?
- The young son commits the biggest sin possible for a young Jewish person (asking for the inheritance was like wishing Dad was 'dead'). Yet the father's love does not change. Do you feel distant from God because of something you have done will you accept the love that the Father shows to his child is the same love that is shown to you? Would you accept this love is given to you in the sacrament of reconciliation? What holds you back?
- Identify the thoughts and feelings of each character, the younger son, the older brother, the Father. Which character do you identify more strongly with? Why?
- The Father does a number of humiliating actions which show the depth of his love. The Father runs in public. It was unbecoming for a Jewish elder to show one's ankles in public. It is the equivalent of 'baring one's bottom'. The crowds attention is now drawn away from the son and the possibility of hurting him. The father accepts the humiliation, in front of the whole community, of the older son angry and argumentative. Does the older son wish the father was dead too? Does anyone appreciate the Father's love? If this is what God is like toward you what is your response?
- What is one action that you will do to 'livetheword' this week?