

Covenant Life

- Our next prayer meeting is two weeks from today on April 13th at 3pm. Children and Youth ministries plan to meet.
- Registration for CAMP JESUS (June 9-13) is OPEN until April 15th. Register [here](#) or contact camp-jesus@GodsDelight.org.
- In the month of May we will shift our meeting pattern to the 1st and 3rd Sundays to allow more time with our families on Mother's Day.
- GodsDelight.org has prayer meeting [audio](#), [summaries](#), [transcripts](#), and [teachings](#).
- Your ongoing financial support to the Community is sincerely appreciated. Please enter your 2025 Promise [here](#), donate online [here](#), or mail your donations to P.O. Box 225008 Dallas, TX 75222.

Reflection

When I heard that today was Laetare Sunday (the Fourth Sunday of Lent) and that it translates as Rejoice, I recalled Gaudete Sunday (the Third Sunday of Advent) which also translates to Rejoice. I do not recall the connection before. It was interesting to learn that practices such as the prohibition against flowers on the altar and limitations on the use of musical instruments are waived today.

The difference comes from the Entrance Antiphons where today we hear "Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast" whereas on Gaudete Sunday we hear "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near." I learned that Gaudete translates to exuberant joy whereas Laetare translates to internal joy.

So today, at the halfway point of Lent, the Church provides us with a small preview of the coming of Easter. We have inner joy and rejoice with the Church in anticipation of the coming of our Savior's resurrection and the joy of life eternal that Jesus won for us.

In the Gospel today, Jesus is addressing tax collectors and sinners and the Church omits the first two parables about the lost sheep and lost coin and presents the longer parable about the lost son. Luke puts these three parables back-to-back following his statement about Jesus drawing tax collectors and sinner close. We can meditate on why Jesus told these three parables to this audience and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to us.

One obvious connection is the response to the lost (sheep, coin, son) ...the response of rejoicing! It is likely that Jesus is concerned about those in sin not having the hope of reconciliation. He invites those hearing the stories to imagine the abundant joy of the Father at our turning from whatever separates us from Him and being found, rediscovering the unconditional love of the Father.

What does God want to say to us today through these readings? The answers are likely as varied as we are but the question that we can ponder is...are we lost? Have we accepted being distant from our Father? What in our lives may have drawn us away? What may be keeping us back from the plan He has for us? Do we have the courage to admit that we have all fallen short and turn to Him?

These parables are stories of hope. Stories that are meant to assure us that God is in search of us, that He loves us unconditionally, and that it is never too late to run back into His arms.

When I prayed through the passage this morning, I was reminded that this message is for me (and for all of us). Regardless of how closely we might identify with the actions and plight of the Prodigal Son, we are invited to ponder even the little ways that we might be straying. Where am I lost in not taking advantage of all that God has for me. How is our Community lost and not taking advantage of God's perfect will and plan for us? Let us together not miss the opportunity to ponder and respond.

Let us pray, "Jesus, I thank You for the reminders today of our Heavenly Father's great and unconditional love. I pray for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to help me to see today the area of my life where I am lost. I hear You calling me back to You and desire to turn from whatever might be holding me back. I rejoice in the promise of reconciliation and look forward to the celebration of Your passion and the gift of eternal life that You won for me. Thank You again for always being there, always calling me close, and for Your words of hope that are the foundation of my continual effort to know and follow Your perfect will for my life. I love You. Amen."

God Bless,

David