

NEW BEGINNINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

Fourth Sunday in Lent – March 30th, 2025 (11:11 am)

ALL THAT IS MINE IS YOURS

Psalm 32

Isaiah 12:1-6

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 (Oldest son)

Jesus Christ Has Reconciled Us to the Father

God the Father has opened His heart to us in love. While we were *“still a long way off,”* He saw us and *“felt compassion”* (Luke 15:20). Therefore, He gave His only begotten Son for us, making *“him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Cor. 5:21). By the ministry of reconciliation, He runs to us, embraces us in mercy and clothes us with His glory as beloved sons in Christ Jesus. And so we give thanks unto the Lord our God, who has taken away our sins and turned His anger from us (Is. 12:1). Because He has become our salvation, our strength and our song, we *“will trust, and will not be afraid”* (Is. 12:2).

As he reflects on the events that have transpired, the eldest son struggles with frustration and resentment. Throughout his life, he has been a model of duty and obedience, working tirelessly on his father's estate and fulfilling his responsibilities without complaint. He has remained steadfast and loyal, while his younger brother sought freedom and squandered his inheritance in reckless living.

One day, as the eldest son returns from the fields, he hears the sounds of celebration coming from the house. Confused and curious, he inquires about the commotion and learns that his younger brother has returned. Not only has his father welcomed him back, but he has also thrown a grand feast in his honour. This news sparks a whirlwind of emotions within the eldest son—anger, betrayal, and a deep sense of injustice.

Unable to contain his feelings, he confronts his father, questioning why his loyalty and hard work have never been celebrated in the same way. He expresses his hurt and disappointment, feeling overshadowed by the return of his prodigal brother. In response, his father gently reminds him that he has always been by his side and that everything he possesses is also his. The celebration is not a rejection of the eldest son's loyalty but a testament to the joy of a lost family member's return.

THEMES IN THE OLDER SON'S STRUGGLE

- **Injustice:** The older son feels the situation is unfair. He has obeyed his father all along, yet his wayward brother is being celebrated. This sense of injustice is something we can all

relate to when we feel someone doesn't deserve what they receive. Grace can seem unfair, especially when extended to those who have been less faithful or obedient.

- **Pride:** The older son's pride is evident in his self-righteous attitude. He believes his obedience entitles him to more than his brother. He views his good behaviour as a ticket to a special reward and fails to recognize that his father's love is not earned but freely given.

- **Jealousy:** The older son's jealousy over his brother's celebration is rooted in comparison. His insecurity in his relationship with his father leads to resentment. How often do we, like the older son, look at others and feel jealous of the grace and blessings they receive, believing we deserve them more?

- **The "Righteous" Feel Like the Pharisees:** The older son reflects the attitude of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, who believed their strict obedience made them more deserving of God's favour. He embodies entitlement and self-righteousness, thinking that obedience is the sole requirement for receiving his father's love.

- **Obedience Without Love:** The older son obeys his father, but not out of love—rather, out of duty. His obedience is transactional, as he believes it makes him superior to his brother and more deserving of his father's love.

- **Superiority – "I Deserve the Father's Love":** The older son believes he deserves his father's love because of his obedience. This misconception—that God's love is earned through good works—remains common. But God's love is not about deserving; it is about His grace. Does righteousness alone make us worthy of God's love? The older son thought his faithfulness entitled him to more, yet God's love is not something we earn—it is freely given.

- **Acceptance of Others – "Even the Unrighteous":** Like the older brother, we sometimes struggle to accept those who come to faith after a life of disobedience. Yet Luke 15:10 reminds us, *"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* The father rejoices over his son's return, and we are called to do the same.

- **Sometimes We Are Like the Older Brother:** At times, we feel entitled to God's love or resentful when others receive grace. We forget that we, too, need God's mercy. His love extends to all, regardless of past mistakes.

Through this experience, the eldest son begins to understand the depth of his father's love and the importance of compassion and forgiveness. The parable of the Prodigal Son highlights the challenge of reconciling duty with grace, and the eldest son's journey underscores the power of embracing both justice and mercy.

GOD'S LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL

The father's response to the older son is profound: "*Son, all that is mine is yours*" (Luke 15:31). His love is not conditional upon obedience or disobedience. God invites us to join in the celebration—not because we deserve it, but because of His boundless grace.

"COME AND JOIN US"

The older brother's story challenges us to relinquish pride and jealousy and understand that God's love is not earned—it is given freely. Whether we see ourselves as obedient or rebellious, God's love is always accessible. Just as the father invites the older son to join the celebration, God calls us all to receive His love today and always. **"COME AND JOIN US."** Amen.