



Lectionary Leaf*

for Lent 3 C

____ 1st Reading: Isaiah 55:1-9

What's the toughest thing about packing up and moving to another home? Here the exiles in Babylon are being challenged to pack up, to get ready, for God was coming to bring them home.

Is there someone you know who is also hungry and thirsty for God? How might you point him or her to the true source of water and food?"

Verse 3. Who in their family when they were growing up most heard this or something like it, "Listen! Pay attention!"?

What do you think it means to 'seek the Lord'?

When have you found yourself really seeking God? Why? What happened?

____ 2nd Reading: Psalm 63:1-8

Where does the psalmist feel he/she is in regard to God?

But does he/she stay there?

What desert have you been through lately?

Which verse from this psalm best fits your relationship with God right now?

St. John Chrysostom advised us to read this psalm each day. Why?

____ 3rd Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

When you were growing up, what or who did your parents use as an example or warning for you? What have you used with your own children?

What are the temptations you have the most trouble with on your own spiritual journey?

What insights does Paul give in coping with them?

What's something from the old life that you know you need to leave behind in order to fully follow Christ?

____ 4th Reading: Luke 13:1-9

When did you first come to realize how fragile life can be?

If you knew this would be the last day of your life, how would you spend it?

What would you want to make sure you did?

If you took the words of Jesus to repent seriously, what would that mean for you right now in your life?

Reflect now on a hymn like "Nearer My God to Thee" or "O Master Let Me Walk With Thee," as both of these speak to the theme in today's readings about seeking the Lord.

A WHY to Live

When Jewish psychiatrist Victor Frankl was arrested by the Nazis in World War II, he was stripped of everything—property, family, possessions. He had spent years researching and writing a book on the importance of finding meaning in life—concepts that later would be known as logotherapy. When he arrived in Auschwitz, the infamous death camp, even his manuscript, which he had hidden in the lining of his coat, was taken away.

"I had to undergo and overcome the loss of my spiritual child," Frankl wrote. "Now it seemed as if nothing and no one would survive me; neither a physical nor a spiritual child of my own! I found myself confronted with the question of whether under such circumstances my life was ultimately void of any meaning."

He was still wrestling with that question a few days later when the Nazis forced the prisoners to give up their clothes.

"I had to surrender my clothes and he in turn inherited the worn-out rags of an inmate who had been sent to the gas chamber," said Frankl. "Instead of the many pages of my manuscript, I found in the pocket of the newly acquired coat a single page torn out of a Hebrew prayer book, which contained the main Jewish prayer, SHEMA YISRAEL (Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one God. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.)

"How should I have interpreted such a 'coincidence' other than as a challenge to LIVE my thoughts instead of merely putting them on paper?"

Later, as Frankl reflected on his ordeal, he wrote in his book *MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING*, 'There is nothing in the world that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions, as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life...He who has a WHY to live for can bear almost any HOW.'

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Lord, we seek you, knowing and rejoicing that you also seek us. May this day and each day find us finding one another. Amen.

*Use *Lectionary Leaf* for your private or family devotions this week. Check off the passages as you read them. Reflect on and discuss the questions.

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Lectionary Leaf*

for Lent 4 C

_____ **1st Reading:** Joshua 5:9-12

What rite of passage marked your coming into adulthood?

When or how have you felt God calling you to cross over the Jordan, leave the past behind, and come to a new land?

Where or how do you most need God to give you a new beginning in your life?

What's in your own past that would keep you from moving ahead on the journey? What's the good news you hear about your past in this reading?

_____ **2nd Reading:** Psalm 32

Are you more like a horse or mule?

What do you most identify with in this psalm?

What's the source of blessedness or happiness in this psalm?

What does penitence mean to you?

Why do you think the Psalmist refused to confess his sin for so long?

How does it feel to not confess? To confess? To be forgiven?

Where and how do you most need forgiveness now?

_____ **3rd Reading:** 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

If you were appointed as an ambassador to another country, where would you choose and why?

How would you explain or describe to someone else your becoming a Christian? How did it happen?

Do you remember your baptism? What thoughts and feelings stand out to you?

How would you define "reconciliation"?

When did you know that you really were a new creation?

Where do you feel you are called to be an ambassador of reconciliation for Christ?

_____ **4th Reading:** Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Were you ever lost as a child? What happened?

If Jesus came to your community or city today, where might you find him?

Who do you identify with most in the story Jesus tells - the father? The elder son? The prodigal son? Why?

Where are you on the journey? Still at home? Restless to leave? On the road again? In a far country? On your way home? At the homecoming party?

Which One Are You?

A professor at seminary often told us, "If you read a parable of Jesus and feel good about yourself, you probably didn't understand it or identified with the wrong character."

Tell me, when you hear the Parable of the Prodigal Son, with whom do you most identify:

The Prodigal or the Elder brother?

I must be honest and say that I am tempted to identify with the prodigal who, though he's a sinner, really is the hero in the story, or so it seems. I can't say that I have ever identified with the jealous older son who did not welcome or rejoice at the return of his young and foolish brother. But I am probably more like that than I care to admit.

But I have been reading Henry Nouwen's book on the Prodigal Son. In it he challenges us right in the first chapter about just who we should identify with in this story. It surprised me. Nouwen talks about a revelation that came to him from this story when a friend told him he should be the father-- welcoming home those who have wandered and returned.

That seems to me to be a real message or sermon seed worth growing. It's a challenge for our congregations and each of us -to be a loving parent, welcoming those who come by forgetting our dignity, rushing to embrace them, and killing the fatted calf in celebration. For is this not who God is for us?

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: O Lord, we have come home. You are our home, our true home. You are our father and mother. You have given us life. You have sustained us. Our inheritance in you is more than we could ever deserve. So when we think of our blessings, we are brought to our knees in gratitude. How good you are to us. We can but thank and praise you this and each day. Amen.

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