

Lent Week Three: God's Love



There is no fear in love.

But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.

The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4: 18-19

Welcome to week three of our reflective prayer journey.

This week our focus is the love of God. We are loved, with a love that is not earned and cannot be lost. Maybe you have your own favourite verse or story?

Our experiences of love - of being loved and loving others will shape our perception of the love of our heavenly Father. We may need to recalibrate our understanding and experience so that we can fully encounter the love of God.

During lent we may undertake new prayer practices or give up something during lent - don't be mistaken into thinking we can earn our love from God - it's unconditional. What we do might help us experience God - but God's love for us stays the same. The story we are focussing on this week is a great illustration of God's love for us.

The Lost Son: This week we focus on the story of the Lost Son - or the Prodigal Son. Interestingly the word prodigal means: 'spending money or using resources freely and recklessly; wastefully extravagant'. But maybe it could be called the Prodigal Father - as it is the father gives lavishly to both of his sons.

Don't forget the prayer resources on the website: **standrewsdentonsgreen.org**. And the prayer apps such as: LiveLent, Examine, Pray as You Go, Lectio 365 etc

Lent Week Three: Three prayers - 5,15, 55 minutes

5 minute prayer

We are loved, with a love that is not earned and cannot be lost.

Look around can you see something that symbolises God's love for you? Unconditional love - not based on what you have done or achieved. You are God's child and God loves you.

Can you say this prayer?:

**God, never let me forget that you are Love itself.
Direct my vision towards this incredible and mysterious truth.**

I thank you that you love me for who I am, for who you made me to be, and not for what I've done or failed to do.

I pray your love for me will be the inspiration for my week ahead, and bring me joy even in the midst of hardship and difficulty.

Amen

Music:

***Taize:** Nothing Can Ever Come Between Us and the Love of God
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQInYSKIR_c

How good it is to sing
Loved before the dawn of time
Forever reign
[In Christ Alone](#)

15 minute prayer

God is love

Can you remember finding something that you had lost? In the story of the lost son a father is reunited with his son and he is overjoyed. He immediately forgives him and welcomes him back.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.”

What do you notice in this verse? Read it slowly and savour the words and phrases.

Can you imagine how God feels about being reunited with you?

Can you imagine the scene?

This father saw his child when they were still a long way off - this suggests the father was waiting for him, looking for him.

In the culture of the time it was not acceptable for a man to run in public - this Father exposes himself to public humiliation.

What is your prayer today ?

55 minute prayer:

Imaginative Prayer Reading: Luke 15:11-32

Read through the passage a few times using the instructions below. Take time to imagine the setting and yourself within the story.

Context:

- When the son asks for his share of the estate it is a very disrespectful request - he is asking for what he might be due if his father was dead. Jesus's listeners would be shocked: the suggestion is unthinkable!
- Feeding pigs for a Jewish young man would make him a social outcast, unclean. His community would be likely to shun him.
- In the culture of the time it was not acceptable for a man to run in public - this Father exposes himself to public humiliation.
- Robe, ring, sandals and party: are all symbolic of honour and authority.

1. Use the passage here or find a translation you prefer

2. Take a few moments to become still and quiet.

You may find it helpful to centre yourself by breathing slowly in and out. Notice any discomfort in your muscles and gently stretch and let go of tension.

Invite God to work through your imagination as you pray with the passage. Ask God for what you want - if you are not sure: "To know you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly".

3. Read the section once so you understand the context.

Then read through two or three times until you are thoroughly familiar with the story.

Now **let the scene gradually build up** in your mind's eye. Take your time to see everything that is around, listen, feel, taste, and smell.

4. **Where are you?** *Take your own place in the unfolding scene. You may start as a bystander, a servant or one of the central characters, or simply enter into the action as yourself. It might help to imagine what the characters are wearing*
5. **As you watch the action** - *what do you see? Is there a moment in the story or a word or phrase that stands out to you? What does this make you think or feel? Might God be inviting you to reconsider your view of him? Or of yourself? Or of the way relationship with God works?*
6. **Let yourself be drawn naturally into conversation** with a character or another participant. Or maybe to Jesus as he tells the story.

Maybe you relate more easily to one brother more than the other? Challenge yourself to walk in the other one's shoes/
7. Stay in the scene for as long as you have chosen then draw the prayer to a close.
8. **Note down your reflections:** it may be just one word, an observation, a memory, or an image. Maybe you have noticed something new, learned something or maybe something has spoken directly to you. Be careful and remember to use discernment to judge if you are hearing God.

Talk to God. What impact does this passage have on you? Does it change anything?

Luke 15:11-32 NIV The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' **20** So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. **27** 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. **29** But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

31 "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. **32** But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Images for Lent Three: What does love look like?

Like a Father's love for a child he thought was lost.

