

SEPTEMBER 15, 2019
Sunday of the 24th Week in OT
Lk. 15: 1-32

WITH ALL MY HEART, I FORGIVE YOU.

A letter written to a man on death row by the Father of the man whom the man on death row had killed: You are probably surprised that I, of all people, am writing a letter to you, but I ask you to read it in its entirety and consider its request seriously. As the Father of the man whom you took part in murdering, I have something very important to say to you. I forgive you. With all my heart, I forgive you. I realize it may be hard for you to believe, but I really do. At your trial, when you confessed to your part in the events that cost my Son his life and asked for my forgiveness, I immediately granted you that forgiving love from my heart. I can only hope you believe me and will accept my forgiveness. But this is not all I have to say to you. I want to make you an offer — I want you to become my adopted child. You see, my Son who died was my only child, and I now want to share my life with you and leave my riches to you. This may not make sense to you or anyone else, but I believe you are worth the offer. I have arranged matters so that if you will receive my offer of forgiveness, not only will you be pardoned for your crime, but you also will be set free from your imprisonment, and your sentence of death will be dismissed. At that point, you will become my adopted child and heir to all my riches. I realize this is a risky offer for me to make to you — you might be tempted to reject my offer completely — but I make it to you without reservation. Also, I realize it may seem foolish to make such an offer to one who cost my Son his life, but I now have a great love and an unchangeable forgiveness in my heart for you. Finally, you may be concerned that once you accept my offer you may do something to cause you to be denied your rights as an heir to my wealth. Nothing could be further from the truth. If I can forgive you for your part in my Son's death, I can forgive you for anything. I know you never will be perfect, but you do not have to be perfect to receive my offer. Besides, I believe that

once you have accepted my offer and begin to experience the riches that will come to you from me, that your primary (though not always) response will be gratitude and loyalty. Some would call me foolish for my offer to you, but I wish for you to call me your Father. Sincerely, The Father of Jesus. <http://www.inspirationalarchive.com>

For the Pharisees and Scribes, Jesus is a sinner and can not be a Messiah because He ate with sinners and tax collectors. He is one of them. By our experience, eating with friends and relatives are expression of love, care and joy for being with them. Jesus Christ did not deny that He is eating with sinners to called them to God and they responded to His invitation that makes Him happy and full of joy that they have come home to God. God is so crazy with us. We are His favorite creatures. If our God had a fridge, our magnet picture would be there. In He had a house, your awesome picture will be on the wall for others to see it. If He had a wallet or bag, your photo would be in it. If He had a cellphone or tablet or computer, your picture will on the screen. Whatever or whenever you want to talk, He will always listen. My friends, God is crazy about you.

The three parables show to us that the Lord is pleased that we are once more with Him. Like the Forgiving Father in the third parable, God focusses not on our past, his focus is on our present and our presence with Him. God doesn't carry a grudge and the cause of His joy is our return to Him. We cannot force God to forgive us, but it does happen, it does take place because of His love for us. Anything we have done in the past or we will be doing in the future be beyond God's greatness, compassion and mercy.

In one of Father James Gilhooley homilies, these parables were called the Parable of the Crazy Shepherd or the Crazy God. "Only a crazy shepherd would leave a large flock and go in search of a stray sheep. Where would he find the energy after such a long day? How would he be able to work the next day? And how would he find a sheep in the night? What if a wolf or mountain lion should come upon the main body of sheep destroying some and dispersing all the others? How would the shepherd explain this

situation to his employer? Quickly would he join the ranks of unemployed shepherds and begin looking for a second career. I am certain that Jesus replied just as quickly, "I fully agree with you. All your objections are valid and genuine, my dear friends. No sensible shepherd would take such a walk looking for one foolish sheep. I suspect there is not one among you who would do so. However, God will do so with eagerness and without a microsecond's thought. And, having found it, He will host a large victory party for all and sundry. There will be wine, music, and much laughter. God's love for each of you, even the most sinful of your company, is vast and unqualified. Father James Gilhooley, homilies.net.

My brothers and sisters, Jesus Christ is calling us to move beyond whatever is holding us back and be joyful because He forgives us. By that, we need also to forgive ourselves. Let us therefore move on with God who is our guide and "the way, the truth and the life."

Let us go back to the letter of the Father of Jesus to us. The Father of Jesus said: With all my heart, I forgive you. I want you to become my adopted child and heir to all my riches. Sisters and brothers, what will be our answer?

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for your love and forgiveness. Even if I always go astray with you, you are still willing to embrace me and accept me without any questions. May your love grow in me that I may always seek to love and serve others generously for their sake just as you have generously laid down your life for my sake. May nothing keep me from following you with all my heart, mind, and strength. Amen."