

21 March 2004
(Fourth Sunday in Lent)
Rev Robert Lamerton

Joshua 5.2-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5.16-21; Luke 15.11-32

(transcribed from notes)

"Sorry seems to be the hardest word." Elton John
apologizing is

- difficult
- facing up to the person
- admitting you were wrong
- humbling

The son in the story was sure his way was best
He found himself in deep—(trouble) in the pig pen...
Recognized his future

Worried out of his mind how he would deal with it

---he believed he couldn't be welcomed back as a son, but it might be possible as a slave
It is difficult to admit when we are wrong and put things right.—It is also difficult if we
believe we are right and to keep the lines of communication open when someone is in open
disagreement.

But in the story, the son decides to head home. I imagine he was very apprehensive about the
sort of reception he would get.

But in this story his Father is overjoyed to see him—because in this story the Father
represents a loving God and the story is told with that very purpose—to let the religious
people (Pharisees and scribes) know that the sinners who were Jesus' friends and with whom
he ate, would be welcomed by God.

Pharisees—a religious party which at least allowed some interpretation of the law unlike the
Saducees who tried to live precisely to the law of Moses. However, the Pharisees' additional
interpretations were considered like the law itself (and legalisms)... fostered education and
worship in the synagogues and on one occasion refused to swear allegiance to Herod. Had a
large following of people impressed by their austerity and their opposition to their pagan
rulers.

Not all bad.

Scribes—a class of professional teachers of the law who were like the bureaucrats of the
Sanhedrin—were close to the high priestly family.

It was their faithful transmission of the religion of Israel which gave us the Old Testament.
Again, not all bad!

But they appear in these stories to highlight narrow religious attitudes and allows Jesus
alternative teaching to be understood.

Back to our story. Jesus creates a beautiful picture of reconciliation
Father and Son

or

God and we humans.

and the focus for celebration is

- robe—garment for celebration/banquet
- ring—symbol of authority (restoration)
- sandals—he is not a slave
- fatted calf—kept for a great occasions

So this story which begins with concern about eating with sinners end with the irreconcilable outcast of a son eating and celebrating with his Father.

So those who have high standards and could not see "sinners" as real people have a picture of reconciliation.

the dead is alive

the lost is found

The attitudes of the scribes and pharisees.

- Angry and proud
- Always good
- unable to see beyond himself

To God who forgives and restores and celebrates

There are a lot of things here

1. Attitudes to people who differ from ourselves. Often we really don't know them and we form a kind of caricature of what they are like without really getting to know them.

The bridesmaid yesterday, went to work with the bride... Anna just kept being friendly until ten years on, her new workmate was her bridesmaid...

2. Attitudes of children to parents.—not realizing that parents were young once and faced similar difficulties themselves!

Woman yesterday; late 20's; left home at 14.

Mostly, parents continue to be interested and concerned. In fact, Christian duty to remain interested and concerned, but not interfering.

3. People we live with (families);

Work with;

Reconciliation—aim

Not always possible;

But it comes when we are willing to turn around, seek God, and face the music...