

Prayer ~ Sunday 31st March 2019

No 902

Lectionary readings: Joshua 5: 9-12; Psalm 32; 2
Corinthians 5: 16-21; Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32 (4th in Lent)

For reflection and prayer

- **Joshua 5:** This was a new beginning for Israel for they had reached the promised land. It was a time of celebration, a time to remember God's miraculous provision and blessing. God had brought them into a spacious, abundant place. Each day is a day of new beginnings for us, a day of celebration of God's lavish provision, God's loving presence. Let's reflect this week on all the way the Lord has led us and the blessings we need to give thanks for. Where we are is a spacious place, an abundant place. It's where we will find God, nowhere else. It's where God wants to bless us.
- **Psalm 32:** Here are some verses from 'Psalms for Praying' for us to reflect on. *'Blessed is each one whose wrongdoings have been forgiven, whose shame has been forgotten. Blessed is each one in whom Love Divine finds a home, and whose spirit radiates truthForgive me, O Comforter, for those times I have sinned in my thoughts, my words and my deeds. And the Beloved created a clean heart within meLet everyone who is sincere give thanks to the Beloved; for whenever we feel overwhelmed by fear, we shall be embraced by LoveBe glad and rejoice, all you who walk along the path of truth.'*
- **2 Corinthians 5:** v17 (NLT): *'Those who become Christians become new persons a new life has*

begun.' This speaks to me of a radical transformation so that we see others with new eyes, God's eyes. As God in Christ has forgiven us, so He wants us to forgive others, to see the image of God in each person, to see beyond the outward, reaching out with love and acceptance, just as God has done to us. We are called to be the eyes and ears and mouth of Christ today. If people see God reflected in us, they are more likely to be drawn to God and to know the joy of walking with Him through life.

- **Luke 15:** This is the well-known story of the prodigal son. Imagine yourself as the younger son, wanting to go your own way, thinking that spells freedom, but usually resulting in our losing our true self and ending up in bondage. Can you identify with that? See the father in the story, full of compassion, with nothing but love in his heart, waiting patiently, looking lovingly and longingly for his son to return. Is this a picture of the God we believe in, who has no words of condemnation for us, only acceptance and a desire to enfold us in His loving arms? And then there's the older son, always in the father's presence, but keeping his distance and filled with resentment; and all the time the father wants to draw close and shower his gifts of love, forgiveness and grace. This is how God feels toward us. So the father waits with outstretched arms for the older son to come back too, even though that son doesn't know he has drifted away. He has not learned to know himself. Read this parable again putting yourself in each character's shoes and hear what God says to you through this story. I would recommend 'The Return of the Prodigal Son' and 'Home Tonight', both books by Henri Nouwen on this parable.