

Lent 4: Episcopal Relief & Development Sermon Notes

Joshua 5:9-12

By the miraculous hand of God, the shame of the Israelites is lifted. They have been freed from slavery in Egypt and their time of wandering in the wilderness is over. They now settle in the land of Canaan. They are but a remnant, since many who did not trust and obey God (including Moses) will not enter the new land. After the battle of Jericho and crossing the Jordan River, they move into new territory. They circumcise a new generation. There is no more manna, so they now celebrate the Passover with the fruit of this new land.

We face similar challenges. We stand on the ground of great achievements. Yet many suffer the ravages of pandemic disease, environmental calamity, lack of education, economic collapse and political upheaval. Old manna will no longer sustain us. To meet these daunting challenges, we must renew and employ resources that God has given us. Episcopal Relief & Development equips us to direct our resources in meaningful ways.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

The words of Paul in Corinthians urge us to recognize that if we are in Christ, the old world is gone, and the new has come. Christ has reconciled himself to us and given us this message. He has committed us—his ambassadors—to make his message of reconciliation an appeal to the world. Through our work to heal a hurting world, we demonstrate this care and concern and the righteousness of God.

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

A young man claims, then squanders his inheritance. In the midst of famine, he finds himself in a desperate situation with no options. It is then that he remembers his former state and returns home in remorse.

Yet, from a long way off, his father sees him and in spite of his older son's jealousy welcomes and restores him into his former household complete with fattened calf, rings and sandals. These readings of restoration underscore God's anxious desire to embrace us and welcome us home.

As residents of one of the wealthiest nations in the world, we squander our vast resources in a world of fast living. Like the jealous sibling, consumed by our own striving, we are blinded and the plight of our sisters and brothers escapes us. It often takes a crisis, natural disaster or pandemic disease to see the plight of our brothers and sisters. Crises like the earthquake in Haiti jolt us into compassionate action.

Through commitment to ongoing donations to Episcopal Relief & Development, we take our place as ambassadors of Christ's message of reconciliation. Ongoing support will not only make a critical difference in relief efforts. It will support the long-term, daily work of healing, education, building relationships, alleviating hunger, creating economic opportunity, fighting disease, promoting health and preparing for disaster response.

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