Freedom in Christ ( Ps. 32, 2 Cor 5:16-21, Lk15:11-32)

* There is a common theme through all of today’s Scripture readings. (New beginnings)
* In the story from Joshua, we read where the Israelites had entered the promised land and after celebrating the Passover, there was no longer any Manna as they were now eating the produce from the new land in Caanan – a new beginning.
* The Psalmist speaks about how his bones wasted away when he kept silent and remained in his sin. But after confessing his sins to the Lord, he was forgiven and was very much aware of the Lord’s unfailing love for him – a new beginning.
* In 2 Corinthians, St Paul says that when we are in Christ, we are a new creation. The old has gone. The new has come.
* When we turn to Jesus, the slate is wiped clean of our sinful past and we do indeed have a new beginning.
* The gospel story we just read, which is, I believe, one of the greatest parables that

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Jesus told, exemplifies both new beginnings and the consequences when we don’t accept or receive a new beginning when offered.

* We are all offered a new beginning in Christ, but this new beginning will never be forced on us.
* The proud young man thought he didn’t need his father. He demanded his inheritance and then away he went to do his own thing in the world, in his own way, without any regard for others or even for right or wrong.
* You will note that the father “let him go”, just like God “lets us go”. He always respects our free will. However, this parable also reflects the love that God has for each one of us. He is always waiting for us to turn to Him – even after we have made a royal mess of our lives. When we come to the realization of just how poor and needy we are on our own, and repent of our past – God is **always** there to receive us back to Him.
* Some of us realize our need for God

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very early in our journey. Others seem to need to hit the bottom before they can realize it. And some unfortunately, never come to the realization that they need God.

* The young man in the parable (story) had to really hit bottom before he was willing to turn back to God. The story says that he was feeding pods to the pigs. For a Jew to be feeding pigs – do you realize just how low that would be for him?
* Regardless of how far we have strayed – the good news is that in Christ we can **always** turn back (repent) and the slate will be wiped absolutely clean.
* Through nothing other than God’s grace we then stand in the righteousness of Christ
* This parable is a very powerful story that Jesus told to demonstrate the Father’s love for each of us, and how God wants us to be reconciled to Him - to be in

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relationship with Him.

* In spite of this wonderful news however, many either have a hard time to believe it, or else are too proud to admit their messes and mistakes and they choose to go about their lives burdened down by loads of guilt and shame from the deeds of their past.
* In this morning’s Psalm, the Psalmist says: “***Happy are those whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are put away.***” The Psalmist also acknowledges those who live in the guilt and their shame of their sins. He says; “***When I kept silent, my bones wasted away, through my groaning all day long.***”
* When we hold on to the garbage in our lives, it can make us very sick – at the very least, it prevents us from knowing the joy of freedom that God intended for us.
* In John’s gospel, Jesus said to the

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woman at the well:

"***Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life***." (John 4:13-14)

* Sometimes we have to go right to rock bottom, like the Prodigal Son, before we realize this truth.
* The consequences for not realizing that we are destined for a new beginning in Christ is exemplified by the older brother in the story.
* Rather than celebrating the return of his lost brother, as the father invited him to do, he, sadly, was full of anger, jealously and self pity.
* Sometimes it is hard to break away from old patterns and realize that a new beginning in Christ is exactly what our hearts are yearning for.
* There is a story that Nicky Gumble tells

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on the Alpha program about how in the

1950’s his family purchased a TV and even though the quality of the picture was very poor, they could make out the picture and were extremely excited and pleased to have access to this new technology in their living room. Then one day someone told them about connecting an aerial to the TV and the picture became almost perfect. The point he is making is that, although they thought they were perfectly happy with the TV reception before the aerial, now that they had the aerial connected, they would never want to go back.

* It’s sort of like that with our faith as we discover a new relationship with God. We thought we were happy before, but we would never want to go back.
* In Christ every day is a new beginning.