



DIOCESE OF ABERDEEN & ORKNEY

FROM ASHES TO FIRE: A JOURNEY FROM LENT TO PENTECOST

Saturday 5th April 2025

Personal Point of View

On Saturdays during the Ashes to Fire: A Journey from Lent to Pentecost we will hear a personal point of view related to the week's theme and the liturgical season.

These reflections may or may not be anonymous but are from voices in and familiar with the Diocese of Aberdeen and Orkney.

This week's theme is Mercy and Love.



The Prodigal Son is such a familiar parable, both in the story it tells and what the characters experience in their lives.

Whether its in art, music, drama or real life we are all so familiar with the experience and story of someone going away, thinking they know better and then realising the grass is not greener on the other side. Or that someone seems to have a better time of it than we do and is celebrated for doing the simplest thing. Not feeling you're treated the same or fairly in a family or community set up or that someone else doesn't have to work as hard as you to receive the same or more praise. Jealousy, envy, not seeing the best in people are the opposite of the mercy and love we see in the Father in the Parable.

We see the Father in the parable show mercy and love towards the younger son and towards the elder in dealing with their reaction to the younger son's return.

The themes of the Prodigal Son can be seen in Shakespeare, in American Short Stories, in stories of ministers returning and many other places (Prof Alison Jack writes about this).

There are many interpretations of the Parable, from allegory in the early church to other approaches later on (including finding similar stories in other faith traditions). However, one thing appears to remain throughout - the Father's love and mercy. That this is how God treats us, humans who mess up, do not always recognise God in our midst or in our lives. That God is always there to welcome us 'home' with forgiveness, mercy and love.

One Eastern Orthodox scholar - St Tikhon of Zadonsk puts it as: "How God longs to see us come home! How God longs to embrace us and forgive us and restore us to a place of honor, to celebrate our return! How God longs to see those who are dead, restored back to life and health so that they might dwell with Him!"

As the hymn puts it 'There's a wideness in God's mercy'. In Luke 15 we see the welcome and rejoicing of the lost - the lost son, the lost coin and the lost sheep. Three stories to reiterate the point (not just the usual two of Luke!).

However we choose to see the Parable of the Prodigal Son, whichever character we identify with most, or which character we want to hear from but do not (where was the Mother - what did she think, or had she died?). The message of the parable is that God welcomes us into God's loving arms with love and mercy again and again and again.

