

## **Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 30**

**The Collect:** Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### **Old Testament: Joshua 5:9-12 read from the Holman Christian Standard Bible**

9 The Lord then said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the disgrace of Egypt from you." Therefore, that place is called Gilgal to this day.

10 While the Israelites camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they kept the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month. 11 The day after Passover they ate unleavened bread and roasted grain from the produce of the land. 12 And the day after they ate from the produce of the land, the manna ceased. Since there was no more manna for the Israelites, they ate from the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

### **Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people**

### **Psalm: Psalm 32 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer**

- 1 Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, \*  
and whose sin is put away!
- 2 Happy are they to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, \*  
and in whose spirit there is no guile!
- 3 While I held my tongue, my bones withered away, \*  
because of my groaning all day long.
- 4 For your hand was heavy upon me day and night; \*  
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.
- 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you, \*  
and did not conceal my guilt.
- 6 I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." \*  
Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.
- 7 Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in

time of trouble; \*

when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.

8 You are my hiding-place;

you preserve me from trouble; \*

you surround me with shouts of deliverance.

9 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you

should go; \*

I will guide you with my eye.

10 Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding; \*

who must be fitted with bit and bridle,

or else they will not stay near you."

11 Great are the tribulations of the wicked; \*

but mercy embraces those who trust in the Lord.

12 Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the Lord; \*

shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

### **Epistle: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 read from the International Children's Bible**

16 From this time on we do not think of anyone as the world does. It is true that in the past we thought of Christ as the world thinks. But we no longer think of him in that way. 17 If anyone belongs to Christ, then he is made new. The old things have gone; everything is made new! 18 All this is from God. Through Christ, God made peace between us and himself. And God gave us the work of bringing everyone into peace with him. 19 I mean that God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself. In Christ, God did not hold the world guilty of its sins. And he gave us this message of peace. 20 So we have been sent to speak for Christ. It is as if God is calling to you through us. We speak for Christ when we beg you to be at peace with God. 21 Christ had no sin. But God made him become sin. God did this for us so that in Christ we could become right with God.

**Hear what the spirit is saying to God's people**

## **Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 read from the Easy To Read Version Bible**

15 Many tax collectors and sinners came to listen to Jesus. 2 Then the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to complain, "Look, this man welcomes sinners and even eats with them!"

3 Then Jesus told them this story:

"There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger son said to his father, 'Give me now the part of your property that I am supposed to receive someday.' So the father divided his wealth between his two sons.

13 "A few days later the younger son gathered up all that he had and left. He traveled far away to another country, and there he wasted his money living like a fool. 14 After he spent everything he had, there was a terrible famine throughout the country. He was hungry and needed money. 15 So he went and got a job with one of the people who lived there. The man sent him into the fields to feed pigs. 16 He was so hungry that he wanted to eat the food the pigs were eating. But no one gave him anything.

17 "The son realized that he had been very foolish. He thought, 'All my father's hired workers have plenty of food. But here I am, almost dead because I have nothing to eat. 18 I will leave and go to my father. I will say to him: Father, I have sinned against God and have done wrong to you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But let me be like one of your hired workers.' 20 So he left and went to his father.

"While the son was still a long way off, his father saw him coming and felt sorry for him. So he ran to him and hugged and kissed him. 21 The son said, 'Father, I have sinned against God and have done wrong to you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Hurry! Bring the best clothes and put them on him. Also, put a ring on his finger and good sandals on his feet. 23 And bring our best calf and kill it so that we can celebrate with plenty to eat. 24 My son was dead, but now he is alive again! He was lost, but now he is found!' So they began to have a party.

25 "The older son had been out in the field. When he came near the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. 26 So he called to one of the servant boys and asked, 'What does all this mean?' 27 The boy said, 'Your brother has come back, and your father killed the best calf to eat. He is happy because he has his son back safe and sound.'

28 "The older son was angry and would not go in to the party. So his father went out and begged him to come in. 29 But he said to his father, 'Look, for all these years I have worked

like a slave for you. I have always done what you told me to do, and you never gave me even a young goat for a party with my friends. 30 But then this son of yours comes home after wasting your money on prostitutes, and you kill the best calf for him!

31 "His father said to him, 'Oh, my son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But this was a day to be happy and celebrate. Your brother was dead, but now he is alive. He was lost, but now he is found.'"

## **The Gospel of the Lord**

**Closing Prayer: On April 1 we celebrate the life of Frederick Denison Maurice Priest. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.**

In the same year that Karl Marx declared religion to be the "opiate of the people," Frederick Denison Maurice wrote, "We have been dosing our people with religion when what they want is not this but the living God." Like Marx, Maurice wanted to solve the questions of our complex society; unlike Marx, he called for a radical, but non-violent, reform, by the renewal of "faith in a God who has redeemed mankind, in whom I may vindicate my rights as a man." Maurice was a founder of the Christian Socialist Movement, which, he wrote, "will commit us at once to the conflict we must engage in sooner or later with the unsocial Christians and unchristian Socialists."

Maurice was born in 1805 into the family of a Unitarian minister whose life was marked by intense religious controversy. Maurice studied civil law at Cambridge, but refused the degree in 1827, because, as a Dissenter, he could not subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. After several personal crises, however, he became an Anglican and was ordained in 1834. Soon afterwards he was appointed Professor of English Literature and History at King's College, London, and, in 1846, to the chair of Theology.

In his book, *The Kingdom of Christ*, published in 1838, Maurice investigates the causes and cures of Christian divisions. The book has become a source of Anglican ecumenism. Maurice was dismissed from his professorships because of his leadership in the Christian Socialist Movement, and because of the supposed unorthodoxy of his *Theological Essays* (1853).

Maurice saw worship as the meeting point of time and eternity, and as the fountain of energies for the Church's mission. He wrote, "I do not think we are to praise the liturgy but to use it. When we do not want it for our life, we may begin to talk of it as a beautiful composition."

After the death of the Christian Socialist Movement in 1854, Maurice founded the Working Men's College, and resumed teaching at Queen's College, London. Maurice awakened Anglicanism to the need for concern with the problems of society. In later years, he was honored even by former opponents. He was rector of two parishes, and was professor of Moral Theology at Cambridge from 1866 until his death.

**Let us pray:** Almighty God, you restored our human nature to heavenly glory through the perfect obedience of our Savior Jesus Christ: Keep alive in your Church, we pray, a passion for justice and truth; that, like your servant Frederick Denison Maurice, we may work and pray for the triumph of the kingdom of your Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**