

Week 3: Becoming Fully Present

Gospels:

John 2:13-25 Driving the money-lenders out of the temple

Luke 15:11-32 The Prodigal Son

Pilgrims travel in hope of receiving Divine blessings and with an open invitation to become more attentive to their surroundings. By becoming truly available to the present moment on this Lenten journey, we too may gently leave behind, our daily life, and keep our hearts open to new experiences. Where are the signs of God's presence around you right now? Are you ready to receive new insights today?



‘Welcome’ by Tony Hisgett (CC BY 2.0)

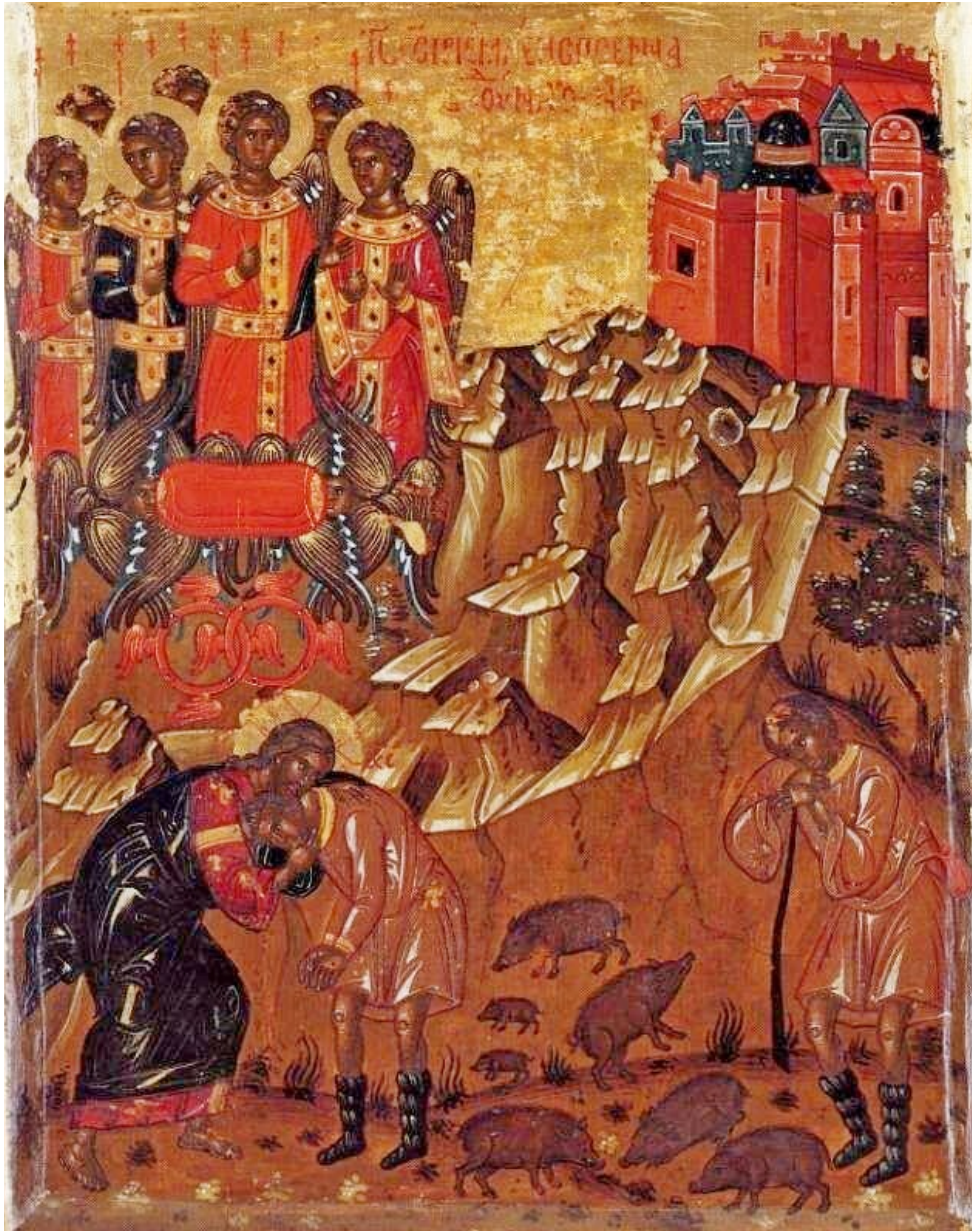
This week our readings reveal two different aspects of justice and mercy in action. We learn of Jesus entering the temple to find pilgrims shopping, having turned the temple from a house of prayer to a market place. The parable of the Prodigal Son who leaves home and returns greatly changed, reveals a pattern of rebellion, ruin, repentance, reconciliation and restoration.

When Jesus walks into the temple he is angry. Sometimes anger is appropriate as the lack of anger at a great injustice disengages us from reality. Jesus was not offended by pilgrims needing to purchase sacrificial animals to fulfil their pilgrimage, but rather that they had insulted God's love by turning the temple into a market place. Jesus reminded them of being in the presence of God in the temple. How could they receive the grace of God on their pilgrimage if at the same time, they were using His house for trading in goods?

Cleansing the Temple



The Prodigal Son



Parable of the Prodigal Son, from the altar of the Church of the Presentation (16th century)

Paradoxically, this is a parable of love. It is a story about the human need for love, family and grace, the need to place the Trinity in the centre of our lives.

All three characters in the story of the Prodigal Son experience an inner pilgrimage. The young son has his fun at a great price, yet Jesus does not leave him to die as a result of his selfishness and greed. The older brother may never have had a grand party with his friends, yet he always had a roof over his head, lacked for nothing and had the love of his family at his side. The father concedes to the demands of the younger son and gives him his inheritance. When he returns, it is obvious his father has been waiting for him, and offers him forgiveness and gratitude. The elder son is outraged by this forgiveness. He cannot see that everyone's life will be better when they are treated with forgiveness and joy.

We may not be making a physical pilgrimage, however, on our inner pilgrimage we must make space by deepening the quality of our attentiveness in order to gain new insights in the here and the now. We may marvel at things we thought we already knew by seeing them anew.

Discussion Starters:

1. How can we become fully present to our surroundings during this Lenten journey?
2. What am I beginning to discover as I grow in my attentiveness to my experience of the everyday?
3. What new insights are emerging, to which I need to pay special attention as they signify for me the presence of God in my life?

Extract from *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton

At such times the awakening, the turning inside out of all values, the newness, the emptiness and the purity of vision that makes themselves evident, all these provide a glimpse of the cosmic dance.

A Reflection for Pilgrims

Take some time to gather wisdom for the continuing journey

What captured my attention

What surprised me

What moved me

What changed me

What is my hope for me and for my faith community

What will I take home

