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## A Reflection For Today

Wednesday of the 1<sup>st</sup> Week of Lent • HopeForNiagara.org



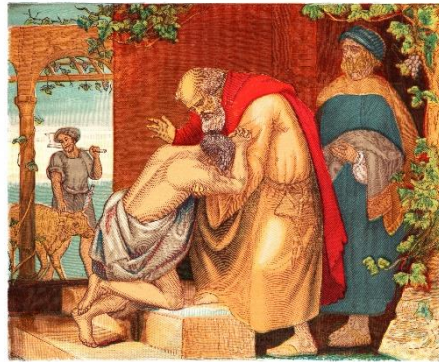
By: Rev. Kathleen Ordiway

Rev. Ordiway is the pastor of First Baptist Church, Niagara Falls, NY. She is also a member of the Niagara Ministerial Council and a member of the Board of Directors of Community Missions.

### **Reconciled**

(Texts: [Luke 15:11-32](#))

This didn't happen to me, but I remember some of my school friends saying that on the first day of school, almost every year, their teachers would look at them and say, "Oh, you are Joe's brother, I expect great things from you" or "You are Carol's sister, I don't want any trouble from you this year!" Their teachers either had good experiences with their siblings or bad ones, and expected the same from them. They saw them through their knowledge of their siblings.



Now if their brothers and sisters were good students who followed direction, were attentive in class, didn't pull pranks all the time, were polite and friendly, turned their work in on time and did their best in everything they did ... as were these friends of mine, then it was a good thing for their teachers to expect them to be like their siblings. They started out on the right foot. But if their sisters and brothers were not their teachers' favorite students ... well, it would mean they had some work in front of them to show their teachers that they shouldn't expect the same from my friends.

This isn't a perfect example of today's passage, but it helps us to understand that the world sees us in a certain, expected way, maybe because of our families and friends, maybe because of where we live, what we look like, what kind of work we do, what kind of car we drive ... they see us in a way that isn't necessarily who we are. But, when we turn our lives over to Jesus Christ, God sees us through His Son – He sees us differently. God doesn't look at our appearance or our possessions. He sees our desire to be reconciled with Himself and with our Savior Jesus.

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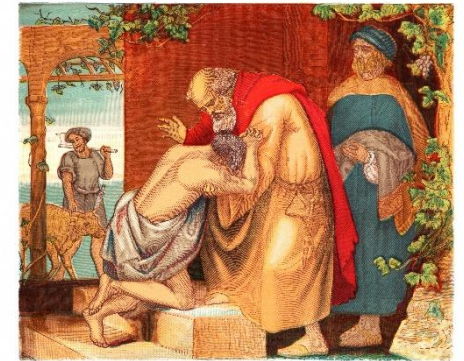
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Reconciled – to take two people who haven’t been on the same path, who maybe haven’t been on speaking terms, who maybe were once friends but have been arguing, doing or saying hurtful things, who are bitter, resentful – or at the least, not getting along... and restoring them to a friendly place. When we are reconciled with God, we are welcomed into a changed relationship. We, us sinners, are brought into a state of favor with God because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Reconciliation - it’s one of the most important words in scripture. It’s what Jesus did for us when He went to the cross for our sins. He removed the tension between God and us, reconciling the conflict – the sin – between us. Jesus came to save us and now we are alive, a new people! He reached down to us, as we reached up to Him!

In the parable, a son turns away from his father and family, takes his inheritance early and set out on his own. He searches for something that he thought would be better than what he had, but he ends up more broken at each step along the way, eventually losing everything. Meek, and sorry, feeling unworthy, he goes back to his father hoping his father will at least let him work as a servant. But his Father welcomes him home and has a feast! He celebrates being reconciled with his lost son!!

When we humbly turn to God, asking for forgiveness, wanting to be reconciled with our Father Creator – we are forgiven because God sees us through His Son’s sacrifice for our sins. He sees Jesus actions on our behalf. God sees His Son standing before Him. God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and we are to be filled with shouts of joy because we have once again been reconciled with our Father!

Our journey though lent is a journey toward the Cross of Christ. It is a journey toward the moment when God reconciled the world to Himself—when God said to us all that “It’s OK, I understand, and I forgive everything! Come and celebrate with me and rejoice. You were lost, and now I have found you again. All is well.”

So we raise our hands and accept God’s love and forgiveness. We raise our hands in praise of Him that knew no sin but died for us. We raise our hands in celebration and joy when we hear that our friends and family have come to know and be in Christ, too! We sing Alleluia because Christ has died for us and He is risen so that we know that we, too, are born into this newness and our promised home. Though I might know sorrow, and trials, and fear, it is well with my soul because I know that Jesus died for me and I am reconciled to the Father for eternity.

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