

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32
"Joy in Repentance"
Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 6, 2016
Our Redeemer Lutheran
Vicar Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

The name Norma McCorvey probably doesn't mean anything to you.

But the pseudonym that Norma McCorvey used in a landmark Supreme Court case in which she was the plaintiff you may recognize.

Back in 1969, Norma McCorvey was working for a traveling carnival and discovered that she was pregnant. She had been living a promiscuous life. Had "Maury Povich" had been on television then, she would have been one of those women demanding to know who is the father of her baby.

She asked a doctor to give her an abortion, but instead found out that abortion was against the law.

She then sought help elsewhere and was recruited as a plaintiff by two attorneys seeking to overturn the law against abortion.

The case took four years to be decided and McCorvey was never able to abort her child. She instead, gave up her baby for adoption.

She later worked answering phones for a Dallas abortion clinic. Immediately next door to that abortion clinic was the office of the pro-life organization Operation Rescue.

After some time answering the phones at the abortion clinic, McCorvey met a seven-year-old girl named Emily who invited her to church. On July 22, 1995, she attended a Christian church.

Soon, she had a change of heart and began referring callers to Operation Rescue. That August, McCorvey was baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Norma McCorvey was known as "Jane Roe" in the 1973 landmark case "Roe v. Wade."

She is now a Roman Catholic and is active in the pro-life movement.

Today she is fighting to overturn “Roe v. Wade” and works on preserving the civil liberties of all, including the unborn.

[Reckless]

Like Norma, the younger son in today’s Gospel lesson lived a reckless life.

He said to his father, ***“Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me”*** (Luke 15:12). And his father gave him his share of the inheritance.

Some days later, that son gathered up all his belongings and set off to see the world. And there, he squandered it all.

He lived the high life. He owned the Ferrari of camels. He lived in a mansion beyond his means. He partied. He went out to the bars all night until they closed. He stayed up all night. He was careless. He played the Roulette wheel. He was promiscuous.

Every last cent was gone. He had nothing. All of his newfound friends abandoned him. He was flat broke. He was now living on the streets.

He hit rock bottom.

[Need of Forgiveness]

When you are at the bottom, you have to start from the bottom. A Gentile hired him to work in his field and feed the pigs – the lowest of jobs for a Jew. You see, pigs are considered “unclean” by Jews.

He was beginning to realize what he had done. He squandered all of his inheritance. He was hungry. He was sorry. He needed family and friendship. He needed forgiveness.

Jesus says, ***“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants’”*** (Luke 15:17-19).

He then packed all that he had, which wasn’t much, and walked home to ask his father for forgiveness.

We, like him, may need to do the same. Have you gotten the courage to ask for forgiveness from a loved one when you have done something wrong?

[Rejoice]

As he was just coming over the horizon into the sight of his father's land, he was shocked beyond all belief!

His father was running toward him! His father wasn't running at him to tell him to get off his property, he was running at him to embrace him! His father hugged and kissed him!

The son then attempted to apologize saying, ***“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son”*** (Luke 15:21).

But, his father didn't care about his words. He cuts him off in mid-speech!

“The father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate” (Luke 22-24).

[Joy in Repentance]

Meanwhile, the older son was out in the field – unaware of what had happened. As he walked toward the house, he heard music and dancing. I'm sure he thought to himself, *“What is going on?!”*

So, he asked one of the other servants about the music and the servant replied, ***“Your brother has come!”***

What would you have done if you were that older brother? You have never disobeyed your parents and always obeyed God. And now your brother who squandered everything is being celebrated?

His father came out and requested his older son to join the party.

He refused and said, ***“Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has wasted one-third of our family fortune with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!”*** (Luke 15:29-30).

His father responded saying, ***“What's mine is yours – It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found”*** (Luke 15:32).

For Jesus said earlier in the Gospel of Luke, ***“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than 99 righteous persons who need no repentance”*** (Luke 15:7).

[Salvation]

Our Heavenly Father welcomes back all sinners who repent. It doesn't matter if you are Norma McCorvey or the prodigal son.

It doesn't matter the evils you have done in this life as long as you repent and follow Jesus!

Salvation is there for all who repent and follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior!

Amen!

Now, let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Amen!