

*Merciful Lord,
you know our struggle to serve you:
when sin spoils our lives
and overshadows our hearts,
come to our aid
and turn us back to you again;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Joshua 5.9-12

The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.' And so that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the Israelites were encamped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

*God of love,
passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Psalm 27

Happy the one whose transgression is forgiven,•
and whose sin is covered.

Happy the one to whom the Lord
imputes no guilt,•
and in whose spirit there is no guile.

For I held my tongue;•
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all the day long.
Your hand was heavy upon me day and night;•
my moisture was dried up
like the drought in summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you•
and my iniquity I did not hide.

I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord;•
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Therefore let all the faithful make their prayers
to you in time of trouble;•
in the great water flood, it shall not reach them.

You are a place for me to hide in;
you preserve me from trouble;•
you surround me with songs of deliverance.

'I will instruct you and teach you
in the way that you should go;•
I will guide you with my eye.

'Be not like horse and mule
which have no understanding;•
whose mouths must be held with bit and
bridle, or else they will not stay near you.'

Great tribulations remain for the wicked,•
but mercy embraces those
who trust in the Lord.

Be glad, you righteous,
and rejoice in the Lord;•
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

2 Corinthians 5.16-21

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

*Merciful Lord,
absolve your people
from their offences,
that through your bountiful goodness
we may all be delivered
from the chains of those sins
which by our frailty
we have committed;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ's sake,
our blessed Lord and Saviour,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

The Gospel of Luke 15.1-3,11b-32

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'
So he told them this parable:

Then Jesus said, 'There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up 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 like one of your hired hands.' " So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.

'Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his

father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." '

*God of compassion,
whose Son Jesus Christ,
the child of Mary,
shared the life of a home in Nazareth,
and on the cross drew
the whole human family to himself:
strengthen us in our daily living
that in joy and in sorrow
we may know
the power of your presence
to bind together and to heal;
through Jesus Christ
your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

