

A reading from the book of Exodus.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

The Lord said to Moses,
 “Go down at once!
 Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt,
 have acted perversely;
 they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them;
 they have cast for themselves an image of a calf,
 and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it,
 and said, “These are your gods, O Israel,
 who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”
 The Lord said to Moses,
 “I have seen this people,
 how stiff-necked they are.
 Now let me alone,
 so that my anger may burn hot against them
 and I may consume them;
 and of you I will make a great nation.”
 But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said,
 “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people,
 whom you brought out of the land of Egypt
 with great power and with a mighty hand?
 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants,
 how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them,
 ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven,
 and all this land that I have promised
 I will give to your descendants,
 and they shall inherit it forever.’”
 And the Lord changed his mind
 about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Pause for **THREE** seconds
 then look up at the people
 and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Beloved:

I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord,
who has strengthened me,
because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service,
even though i was formerly a blasphemer,
a persecutor, and a man of violence.

But I received mercy
because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,
and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me
with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners –
of whom I am the foremost.

But for that very reason I received mercy,
so that in me, as the foremost,
Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience,
making me an example
to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life.
To the King of the ages,
immortal, invisible, the only God,
be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.



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GOSPEL READING – C 24

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

All the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus.
And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,
“This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
So he told them a parable:
“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them,
does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness
and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?
When he has found it,
he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices.
And when he comes home,
he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them,
‘Rejoice with me,
for I have found my sheep that was lost.’
Just so, I tell you,
there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents
than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.
Or what woman having ten silver coins,
if she loses one of them,
does not light a lamp, sweep the house,
and search carefully until she finds it?
When she has found it,
she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying,
‘Rejoice with me,
for I have found the coin that I had lost.’
Just so, I tell you,
there is joy in the presence of the angels of God
over one sinner who repents.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL READING ... LONGER VERSION – C 24

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

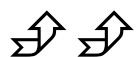
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there is joy in the presence of the angels of God
over one sinner who repents.”
Then Jesus said,
“There was a man who had two sons.
The younger of them said to his father,
‘Father, give me the share of the property
that will belong to me.’
So he divided 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.
The young man 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.
The slave 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.'"



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

The caption calls attention to YHWH's abandonment of his intention to punish Israel for making the golden calf and worshiping it. But the really significant feature of the text is Moses' action as a mediator.

He makes intercession for the Israelites by pleading the promise of God to the patriarchs. This picture caught the attention of the psalmist (Psalm 106:23). In this respect, as in others, Moses foreshadows the messianic work of Christ.

There is no New Testament passage that directly recalls this incident, but the same mediatorial function is ascribed to Jesus as is performed here by Moses. On the cross Jesus prays: "Father, forgive them."

He now lives in heaven as the high priest to make intercession for his people (though in Hebrews this is Aaronic rather than Mosaic typology); and he is given the title "mediator" between God and his people (1 Timothy 2:5, to be read next Sunday) as Moses had been mediator between YHWH and Israel.

Responsorial Psalm: 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

It will help us to relate this psalm to the foregoing reading if we think of it as uttered by Christ in his capacity as mediator. He takes our sin upon himself, even to the extent of confessing our sin on our behalf.

In his work *Atonement and Personality* (1917), R. C. Moberly, an Anglican, built up an impressive interpretation of the atonement as a perfect act of repentance performed by Christ on our behalf.

Reading II: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

If, as many modern scholars think, the pastoral letters are the work of a later author who was a member of the Pauline school, this passage is nevertheless thoroughly impregnated with the mind of the Apostle.

It speaks of the understanding of the atonement that Paul acquired in the miracle of his apostolic call.

That was a sheer act of "overflowing grace" to one who acknowledged himself to be the "foremost of sinners" because he had persecuted the Church.

Gospel: Luke 15:1-32 (long form); 15:1-10 (short form)

The Gospel consists of three parables: the twin parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, and the parable of the prodigal son. (The short form gives only the twin parables.)

The parable of the prodigal son already occurred by itself on the fourth Sunday of Lent in series C.

Prefaced by the twin parables, the story of the prodigal son acquires an accent it does not have when it stands alone. Taken alone, the emphasis is on the prodigal son's initiative in returning home.

The twin parables emphasize the prevenient action of God in seeking and saving the lost, a thought that is then carried over into understanding the action of the father in the third parable: while the returning prodigal was still at a distance, his father "ran" and welcomed him home.

Thus understood, all three parables are linked with the atonement, which, as we have seen, runs like a thread through all the readings of the day.

While the earlier readings employed the Christ-to-God aspect of the atonement, the Gospel balances this aspect with the movement of God through Christ to humankind.

The atonement is not the human act of the Son appeasing an angry Deity, but God's gift to his people, in which he undertakes to do for them what they could not do for themselves.

Christ is the presence of God in human form for our sake, seeking and saving the lost.

Reginald H. Fuller