

Ninth Sunday after Trinity

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Date: 02 August 2026

Preacher: Seminarian Matthew Stuart

[0:00] In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen. This morning's Collect asks God to give us the spirit to think and do what is right.

Because without Him, we cannot do anything that is good. God has given us freedom because He loves us.

And the Collect teaches us to ask for the grace that enables us to choose Him. In the parable from our Gospel this morning, we hear about a younger son who uses his freedom to leave the Father who loves him.

Later, after he hits rock bottom, he remembers what life was like in his father's house. Grace is already at work in that memory, healing his wounded will so that he can choose to rise and return home to his father.

A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that fall to me. He asks for the share of his father's property that will one day be his.

[1:23] And not many days later, he leaves home to build the life that he thinks will make him happy. His request reveals the desire that lies beneath every sin.

We want to be our own master and use God's gifts without submitting to his fatherly rule. The father wants his son to remain with him and still allows him to leave anyway, because a son must be free to answer his father's love.

God gives us that same freedom, and his grace makes it possible for us to return after we have used it to turn away from him.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeying to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. He leaves the people who know him and spends everything, damaging his own life with the freedom that he received from his father.

His choices leave him less free until his hunger begins to determine what he will do. We do not have to travel anywhere to enter the far country.

[2:51] Any of us can live there without ever leaving home whenever we receive everything God gives us and then live our lives as though those gifts belong to us alone.

We may continue with the outward duties of Christian life while our desires and decisions no longer take the father into account.

But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in the land, and he began to be and want.

With no more money and famine in the land, the son becomes desperate for food.

He goes to work for a citizen of that country who sends him into the fields to feed swine. For this Jewish son, feeding swine places him among animals the law calls unclean.

Our Lord says, And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. He watches the pigs eat while he remains hungry.

[4:05] But when he came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, and I perish with hunger? He remembers what life was like in his father's house.

And through that memory, grace enables him to see his father's goodness and his own misery very clearly. Now that he sees both clearly, he chooses to begin the journey home.

The collect asks God to give us this same grace so that we can see the good and have the strength to choose it.

God gives us freedom because he loves us, and his grace enables us to choose to love him in return. On the road, the son prepares what he will say.

I will arise and go to my father and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son.

[5:13] Make me like one of your hired servants. He intends to confess his sin and ask for a place among the hired servants because he thinks working as a hired servant is the only way his father will allow him to return home.

But he's thinking in terms of a bargain. We also know something of that bargain whenever shame makes us postpone our return until we have something better to show God.

We may approach confession with promises about the person we intend to become, yet the son has nothing with which to repair his position.

He starts home before he has repaired the damage or made himself presentable, prepared to tell his father the truth. And he arose and came to his father.

Getting up and starting home is his first outward act of obedience. Our return also begins when we act upon the good that grace has enabled us to see.

[6:27] But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. Before the son reaches the house, his father runs down the road and embraces him.

The father has loved him throughout his absence. And when the son turns towards home, he finds that love already moving to receive him.

And the son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight and am no longer worthy to be called your son. He makes no excuses.

He has sinned and he is not worthy to be called a son. The father hears his confession and immediately orders the household to receive him.

Bring out the best robe and put it on him and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet and bring the fatted calf here and kill it and let us eat and be merry.

[7:28] The son prepares his return to work for wages. But his father clothes him as a son and calls for a family feast, restoring the place the son could never earn himself.

We are not merely spectators at this homecoming. In baptism, God made us his children and gave us a place in his house.

We continue to misuse our freedom whenever we take his gifts and live as though they were ours alone. Our return begins when grace helps us to see the truth about our lives and gives us the strength to turn toward God.

For us, that choice may mean coming to confession or asking forgiveness from someone we have hurt without trying to defend ourselves.

It may also mean continuing to care for someone in our lives whose needs have become exhausting. Grace gives us the strength to choose what love requires and to continue doing it even when it is difficult.

[8:48] Repentance is our free response to the love of God. Some of us stay away because we have fallen into the same sin again and are ashamed to confess it one more time.

The son begins his journey home while the consequences of his choices are still with him. And he tells his father the truth about what he has done.

At every mass, the church places us on the road home when we make our confession and receive Christ's forgiveness. At the father's table, he feeds us with the body and blood of his son given for our reconciliation.

He gives us this food so that we have the strength to obey him and grow in the likeness of Christ as we return to our daily lives.

Let us come to the altar this morning as children returning home and give thanks for the life-giving food that the father has prepared for us.

[9:56] Amen. In the name of the father, the son, and the holy ghost. Amen. Amen.