

Returning to God

Scripture Reading — Malachi 3:6-7

I the Lord do not change. So you . . . are not destroyed. . . . Return to me, and I will return to you. — Malachi 3:6-7

From early times the Israelites had a tendency to turn away from God. But God always let them turn back. In one of Jesus' parables, a man's son shames his father and runs away. Eventually the son comes to his senses and returns, hoping for a small scrap of mercy. But the father is gracious and showers the son with love (see Luke 15:11-32). That is how Jesus describes our Father's relationship with his children.

We have limits to our patience and mercy. Occasionally I must appeal to my kids, "I don't have any patience left." If they keep going, I'm afraid my reaction won't be fair. But the patience and mercy of God, who rules the universe, never run out. If we commit the same sin a billion times and are truly sorry for it, he will keep forgiving.

This is not to say there are no consequences. God wants us to look to him. We should not expect to be forgiven without wanting a relationship with God. His forgiveness is about building a relationship with us that will keep us close to him and far from hurting ourselves and others. The heart of God does not change on that point, and if we truly want a relationship with him, the Lord will always take us back.

On this day when the church commemorates Jesus' ascension to heaven, what is your relationship with the ascended King? Do you love and serve him as your Lord and Savior?

Prayer

Dear Jesus, teach us to love. May we reject anything that comes between us and you. Forgive us and take us back when we stray. Amen.

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Printed on October 13, 2019

