

# *Four Gospel Passages through Rembrandt's Eyes*



**Westminster Presbyterian Church**

**Sundays, October 6 – 27, 2024**

**9:45 – 10:45 am**

**with**

**James E. Davison**

**and**

**Sandra Conley**

The 17<sup>th</sup> century painter, **Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn**, possessed an almost uncanny ability to paint scenes and people with remarkable depth and emotion. Some of his later Gospel paintings are especially profound. In this class we will look at four passages, seeking to enter the stories more deeply through Rembrandt's portrayal of them. What did he see in these passages, and how can we see more because of what he saw?

**October 6**

***The Return of the Prodigal Son***

**October 13**

***The Denial by Peter***

**October 20**

***The Three Crosses***

**October 27**

***The Supper at Emmaus***

**Jim Davison** is retired from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He was Minister of Education at Westminster for 17 years. **Sandy Conley** is an artist and long-time member of Westminster. For seven years, Jim and Sandy worked together on the staff of WPC.

## *Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn*

- July 15, 1606** R. is born in Leiden, the Netherlands, to Harmen van Rijn, owner of a mill, and Cornelia Neeltje, daughter of a baker. [Thus R's middle name: *Harmenszoon*]
- 1613-1620 R. attends Latin school to prepare for a profession; then enrolls at Leiden University in 1620, but soon takes an apprenticeship with a painter.
- 1624 R. opens a studio with another young painter, Jan Lievens.
- 1628 R. and Jan gain public recognition due to a visit and praise from Constantijn Huygens, a noted scholar, poet, and diplomat. [Not one, but two streets in Amsterdam are named after him.]
- 1630** R's father dies. That year or the next, R. moves to Amsterdam.
- 1634** R. marries Saskia van Uylenburgh, the cousin of a wealthy art dealer.
- 1634-1642 R. enjoys great success and fame for paintings and etchings; collects art works and takes a loan to buy a large house, with space for students. Saskia bears four children, but three die in infancy. A boy, Titus, born in 1641, survives. R's mother, too, had just died in 1640.
- 1642** At the height of R's success, he completes the *Night Watch*; then Saskia dies of tuberculosis.
- 1643-1653 R. hires a wet nurse for Titus, Geertje, who becomes his mistress. In a sordid series of events in 1648, a new mistress, Hendrickje, works with R. against Geertje. During this period, he also experiences a growing loss of interest by noble families in his style of painting, along with other financial problems.
- 1654 Hendrickje bears a daughter, named Cornelia, in honor of R's mother.
- 1656-1658 A bankruptcy sale of most of R's paintings and estate clears his debts.
- 1663 Hendrickje dies of plague.
- 1668 Titus marries Magdalena van Loo, but he dies of plague seven months later.
- 1669** Titus's and Magdalena's daughter, Titia, is born; R. serves as godfather at her baptism. Seven months later R dies. The unfinished *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple* stood on R's easel.

**"The Prodigal Son" (Luke 15:11-32)**

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.' So he divided his assets between them. <sup>13</sup>A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup>When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup>So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup>He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup>But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup>I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup>I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>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.' <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, <sup>24</sup>for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

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<sup>25</sup> “Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.’ <sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ <sup>31</sup> Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> 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.’ ”