

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost July 17, 2022

INI

## REJOICING IN THE LOST AND FOUND

*Luke 15:1-10*

Scripture Readings

**Ezekiel 34:11-24**

**1 Timothy 1:12-17**

Hymns

**281, 324:1-5, 324:6-8, 342**

Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941) unless otherwise noted

+ *In the Name of Jesus Christ* +

*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear [Jesus]. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."*

*So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, 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 coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

Dear fellow sinners made saints, who once were lost, but now have been found by our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, grace and peace from Him to you.

"LOST AND FOUND"—At Berea, you'll find a bins with sweatshirts, gloves, sunglasses, water bottles, and shoes that have been left at church. At some point, the owners of these items "lost" them. With most of these items, the owners may not have even realized they were lost or that they were lost at church.

We lose all sorts of things. Sometimes we lose things that aren't that valuable to us. We lose pencils and pennies all the time and don't search very hard to find them. Other times we lose much more important things like our keys or our cell phones. While on vacation, my father-in-law discovered he had lost one of his credit cards. It was a credit card he hardly ever used and didn't know how long it had been missing. While that unused credit card wasn't that valuable to him, the thought of someone using it to purchase things he would have to pay for was very unsettling. Calling the

credit card company, he was thankful to hear that no one had made any purchases with the card and he would put the card on hold until he found it or decided to cancel it.

Luke chapter 15 is all about the value of finding what was lost. In our text we have the account of a lost sheep and a lost coin. I'd encourage you to read through all of Luke 15 and hear also of a father welcoming home his son that had been lost to him. This chapter is a gem that reveals to us the heart of our Savior and His love for the lost. So let us join the Triune God, the angels, and all of heaven itself as we rejoice in the lost and found.

As our text begins, the Pharisees and teachers of the law are muttering or grumbling about the company that Jesus was keeping. And Jesus wasn't just keeping company with them, He was actually dining with them—a most intimate form of companionship. You only have dinner parties with people you actually want to be around. Some of the people Jesus was dining with were tax collectors who worked for the hated Roman government. Others were people who had committed well known sins in the community. The Pharisees and law teachers would never even think being seen in the company of such morally unclean people and would NEVER think of eating with them. And so they grumbled and muttered, **“This man receives sinners and eats with them”**

With these words we see how little these religious leaders valued a soul lost in sin. You can see this attitude reflected in how they treat sorrowing Judas. Tormented over betraying innocent Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, Judas went back to the temple only to hear the chief priest and elders say, **“What is that to us? You see to it!”** (Matthew 27:4) If someone was lost in sin, these self-righteous religious leaders thought it was up to that individual to get right with God.

So it is with all the religions of man. Man thinks he has to seek out God and make his relationship right with God through His works and through His prayers. But our God, the God of Scripture, the One True God, doesn't wait for the lost to seek Him, instead HE seeks the lost. In fact, our God is so committed to saving the lost, that He Himself took on flesh and became one of us. Jesus says of Himself, **“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”** (Luke 19:10)

To teach us how much He and heaven itself values even one lost soul, Jesus tells us two parables, two earthly stories that teach us heavenly things. First we hear of a shepherd with 100 sheep, but one of the sheep goes astray. And so the shepherd leaves the 99 behind and goes after the one that has wandered away from the safety of the fold. When he finds it, he doesn't scold it or beat it, instead he joyfully picks up that lost sheep that he has found and actually carries it on his shoulders to make sure it gets back to where it belongs. Rejoicing over the lost that was found, the shepherd throws a party so that others can share in what has been found.

In the second parable, Jesus tells of a woman who has ten silver coins but loses one. And notice where she loses it—right within her house, right under her own nose. And so she lights a lamp and cleans her whole house, looking in every nook and cranny, searching for that one lost coin. That one lost coin has so much value to her that once she finds it, she too invites others to come and rejoice with her that what was once lost has now been found.

Jesus is teaching us how much He values even ONE lost soul and wants to find it. We see this again and again throughout the Bible. When Adam and Eve sin against God in the Garden, does

God wait for them to come to Him? No, He goes to them to find them. When King David lives his lie of adultery and murder, God sends the Prophet Nathan to him. The Holy Spirit sends Philip out of a city full of people, to a desert road to share the Word of God with one man, the Ethiopian Eunuch, who didn't know the Bible was about Jesus. And then there was Judas. The man who loved money more than he loved Jesus. Yet Jesus, reaches out to him again and again to warn him of the path he was on.

Let there be no doubt in any of your minds of the immense value that God places on each individual soul. He values each lost soul so much that He would give His beloved Son into death to pay for the sins of ALL lost souls—from the sins of Adam, Eve, to those of Judas and you! Jesus was willing to give all that He had, His own life, because of the great value He placed on eternally lost souls.

And when the lost is found, when even one sinner repents and looks to Jesus in faith for forgiveness, heaven itself rejoices. Verse 7, ***“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.”*** There are four times the Bible speaks of the angels rejoicing—at Creation (Job 38:4), when Jesus is born, in Revelation before the Throne and the Lamb, and right here in our text—when even one sinner repents. Verse 10, ***“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”***

Heaven has rejoiced over you, dear repentant sinners. Jesus sought you out when you didn't even know you were lost and made you one of His lambs and sheep. And when you wandered away from Jesus in sin, the angels rejoiced when you were found and brought to repentance—turning away from your sin and looking to faith in Jesus.

Then notice at the opening of our text Luke writes, ***“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear [Jesus].”*** This is what those who have been found by the Lord do. They know the Good Shepherd has rescued them from the teeth of that roaring lion, the devil. Jesus Himself has sought out those who wandered from His fold. Jesus Himself got down on His hands and knees and got dirty looking for the lost. And He found you. Now we gather around the Savior who rescued us from our lost-ness because we want to hear Him. With Peter we say, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*** (John 6:68-69)

*Oh, the height of Jesus' love! Higher than the heavens above,  
Deeper than the depths of sea, Lasting as eternity.  
Love that found me—wondrous thought!—Found me when I sought Him not.*

(“Chief of Sinners” verse 2)

And what of others who have been lost? How much do we value them? Maybe the lost are those who have never known Jesus as their Savior. Or maybe it is those who were once present with us in the Lord's house, but we don't see them anymore. Or maybe it is those, who, like the silver coin, that are right in our midst, but are lost, living in unrepentant sin. Do we value their soul enough to go looking for them?

Know that the sins they are lost in might not be those “simple” sins that we are comfortable dealing with and talking openly about. Some may have wandered into those ugly sins that make our stomachs turn just thinking about—sexual sins of an unnatural nature, sins that wreck homes and break marriages, sins of atheism that curse God and blaspheme His Word. Think of the young man in Corinth who was having relations with his step-mother. Are these the type of lost sinners Jesus wants us to seek to find? Absolutely! He died for them all and He wants all to be found.

And if one of the lost from our midst should return in repentance, what then? Should we mutter in skepticism and doubt? Should we make them suffer the way they made us suffer before we welcome them back? Remember, the shepherd didn’t beat that lost sheep, but put him on his shoulders to make sure it got back to the safety of the fold and then invites his friends and neighbors to rejoice in the lost and found.

Even so our Good Shepherd invites us to rejoice in the lost and found. No matter how lost they were, if they were found and brought to repentance, are bearing fruits of repentance, and look to Jesus in faith for forgiveness, then rejoice! Welcome them with the love of Christ. Assure them that even as you have been forgiven and God remembers your sins no more for Jesus’ sake, they have been freely and fully forgiven. Heaven is rejoicing, the angels are rejoicing, may we rejoice with them that once was lost has now been found, even as each of you has been found by the Lord.

*“Lost orange cat, if seen please call....”* was the sign we saw on a street corner last week. While I’m not sure if that orange cat was ever found, that cat was valuable enough to its owner to put signs up around the neighborhood. God values one soul even more. When one is lost He uses His people like the Prophet Nathan or the Evangelist Philip to seek them out. He uses you and me too. And when that soul is found and brought to repentance, heaven itself rings out with joy. May we, the Lord’s church on earth, always echo the halls of heaven rejoicing that what once was lost has now been found. Hallelujah! Amen!

—**Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer**

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