

Sermon for June 16,2024 – The Third Sunday after Trinity

In our gospel text today from Luke 15 we have three parables. A parable is an earthly story having a heavenly meaning. The first parable is about a shepherd losing 1 out of 100 sheep. Second is a parable about a woman losing 1 out of 10 coins. And finally in Luke 15: 11-32, we hear about a father losing 1 of his 2 sons. The focus of all three parables is on the one – not on the 99 remaining sheep or the 9 remaining coins or the 1 remaining son.

The shepherd of the sheep - upon losing one of his sheep - leaves his 99 other sheep in a safe place to go after that 1 lost sheep. The woman of the house is not concerned about the other 9 coins that she has, she knows where they are – but there is 1 lost coin – lost somewhere in her dark house and she must find it. And in the parable of the Prodigal Son a man has two sons of which his youngest son is lost to Him as far as he is concerned. The Father of the prodigal is not worried about his elder son who is with him all of the time and is the heir of all that is his. (And by the way, prodigal does not mean lost as many have come to believe because of the relationship of this parable to the other two “lost” parables in this chapter – instead prodigal means profligate, spendthrift, or prodigious in giving to the point even of excess of self harm.) There are many lessons to be gained from the parables in this chapter.

Let's start with the sheep. One sheep is lost. When the tender of the sheep counted the sheep at the close of the day, he was supposed to have 100 sheep but only had 99. So he left the 99 in their pasture with his helpers and went himself to find the 1 lost sheep. When he found the sheep he threw him across his shoulders and took him home, asking his neighbors to celebrate with him that he found his sheep.

As for the coins, the lady had ten drachmas or denarii. They were valuable to her and were kept in case of hard times. She had misplaced one coin. Being afraid of losing it or that it had been stolen she turned her house upside down searching for it. When she found it she asked her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her for *“I have found the coin that I had lost.”* Jesus tells us - *“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

Finally, we hear the story of a man who had two sons. This is the story that we really want to hear, right? The Father loved both of His sons. The younger son requested his inheritance from his father early – that is – he requested his inheritance before his father died. In the culture of the time, that is the same basically as wishing his father were dead. It was unthinkable to do such a thing. But the Father, loving his son more than he loved himself, relented and gave His Son 1/3 of his entire estate. It was the law of the culture that the elder son inherited and received 2/3 of a father's estate and the other children divided the remaining 1/3 among themselves. So, the young son got 1/3 of the estate, liquidated it and went to a

foreign country where he squandered the money.

When the money was gone, he found himself living in a famine struck country. He hired out to tend pigs and was so hungry that he would have eaten pig food but was given none. After some consternation, the young man came to his senses and decided to return home and ask his father to hire him as a servant. He did just that and moreover, he confessed his sins to his father and then asked him to hire him. *“Father, I have sinned before heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”* But the father was so happy to have him home that he didn't condemn his young son. Instead, he was so happy to have his son home that he threw a party – bringing in musicians - even killing the fattened calf, putting a royal robe upon him. He took his son back – not as a hired servant – but as a royal son. All of this upset the self righteous elder son who complained to his father and was finally told - *“Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost and is found.”*

A live animal is lost and good as dead but is found and there is a celebration. A coin- an inanimate object - is lost and found and there is rejoicing. And finally, and most important, a beloved son is lost and found and there is a party.

Figuring that the last sentence of each parable is what Jesus wants to teach us – what he wants us to remember – from the parable of the lost son - we have the following:

1. In the first parable, Jesus tells us that there will be *“more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”*
2. In the third parable, Jesus tells us - *“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*
3. In the third parable Jesus teaches that the Father says - *It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive, he was lost and is found.”*

God loves His creation – animals, inanimate objects, and most of all He loves the apple of his eye, those created in His image, His people. Even though the apples of His are tarnished in sin they are still most important to God - especially those who are lost. All of heaven rejoices when one sinner repents – when one sinner confesses his sin and believes that God forgives him because His Son Jesus has suffered and died to earn forgiveness for his sins. Heaven celebrates over the repentance of sinners. Dear ones, we were dead in sin but now we are alive in the Christ who has found us. We are alive in Christ – alive in the Word and Sacraments – alive in faith and justified by grace through faith in Christ. Since we are alive in Christ, then we live life in Christ. Live your life! – for you have been found. Be glad when others are found and made alive in Christ. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

Ch 15 Three parables about finding what was lost illustrate human weakness and the strength of God's care.

15 Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.

15:1 *tax collectors*. See note, Mt 5:46.

² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them."

15:2 *receives sinners*. See notes, 7:34, 37; see also p 1764.

15:3–7 The lost sheep represents the sinner, while God, esp the Son, is the shepherd (cf Ps 23; Is 40:11). The found sheep is every Christian, rescued and delivered by God. The neighbors are the saints and angels who rejoice together.

³ So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

⁴ "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?"

15:4 *open country*. Their normal pasture. The emphasis is not on neglecting the flock, but on seeking the lost. (A shepherd typically watched 30–40 sheep, so Jesus' account likely implies the presence of one or two helpers.)

⁵ And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

15:5 The lost sheep is carried home in safety with triumph and celebration. Shepherds often brought the flock home to the village at the end of the day, though not always (cf 2:8).

⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'

15:6 *Rejoice with me*. Climax of the story (cf Rv 19:7).

⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

15:7 The rejoicing in heaven is over those whom the shepherd has found. *need no repentance*. The self-righteous imagine that they need no repentance. Before we are found by the Gospel, the Law must show we are hopelessly lost.

15:1–7 In the first of three similar parables, Jesus uses the devotion of a shepherd to illustrate God's willingness to find the wayward sinner. God does not abandon us to our foolishness but seeks us out, calling us to repentance and to faith in the Gospel. • Bring us home, dear Lord, and let there be joy in heaven. Grant us daily repentance. Amen.

Parable of the Lost Coin

15:8–10 In the second parable, the repentant sinner is like a coin. Unlike the wandering sheep, the coin is inanimate, emphasizing its complete helplessness. The neighbors represent the angels, who are invited to share the joy of God, for He has found something precious.

⁸ "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds *it*?"

15:8 *silver coins*. Perhaps a collection of coins or bits of silver, worn as a headdress, brought into the marriage as the woman's dowry and meant to sustain the family in times of want. The value of such a coin, a day's wages, was once equivalent to the price of a sheep. *light a lamp*. A typical house was dark even in daytime, having few or no windows. Christ, the light of the world, seeks out the lost.

⁹ And when she has found *it*, she calls *her* friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!'

15:9 *Rejoice with me*. See note, v 6.

¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

15:10 *joy before the angels of God.* The celebration of those closest to God over the lost sinner brought to repentance.

15:8–10 The unrepentant sinner is like a coin lost in the darkness. Once lost, we have no more ability to find the Lord than the coin has to find its owner. Yet, the good news of Christ gives “light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death” (1:79). • Thank You, merciful Lord, for seeking us when we had no power to seek You. Amen.¹

Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to *his* father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me*.’ So he divided to them *his* livelihood. ¹³ And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. ¹⁴ But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’”

²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. 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. ²¹ 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.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’

²⁸ “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ So he answered and said to *his* father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’

³¹ “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’”²

¹ Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). [The Lutheran Study Bible](#) (p. 1747). St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House. **15:13** *far country.* Away from the constraints of home. *reckless living.* The idea combines carelessness with moral laxity (cf v 30).

² [The New King James Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Lk 15:11–32.