

"Jesus Welcomes Sinners"

Pentecost 17

1)

Luke 15:1-10

2)

October 6, 2019

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and forever. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Intro: Parents losing a child at the Festival of Lights.

Climax of the intro – the sinking feeling of not being able to find your child.

In our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus had an interaction with a group of Pharisees where he describes the value being placed on something that was lost. But what Jesus focused on was of far greater value than something we could ever lose. Jesus was talking about was the value that God places on lost souls. And he tells us that in our parables – the lost sheep and the lost coin.

Let's think about our lesson this morning. We're told, **"Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him."** These people were the worst of the worst. No one liked them or wanted to be around these types of people. They were the outcasts of society – prostitutes and thieves. Tax collectors were hated b/c they betrayed their own countrymen to work for the Romans – and often found ways to cheat people out of even more money.

Then we're told, **"But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."** The Pharisees and teachers of the law were the religious leaders of the Jews. They considered themselves very "holy" men – but the problem was that they trusted in their own works instead of God's mercy. They didn't believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Can you see the problem, then, that Jesus posed b/c he was associating himself with these dirty, rotten sinners? Talking with them, eating with them and staying in their homes was more than they could take! The Pharisees had seen Jesus do this sornn t of thing over and over again throughout his life and ministry. They probably thought to themselves – "How dare he associate with

these people!” What were the tax collectors and sinners to the Pharisees? Worthless.

So Jesus told them two parables. A parable, remember, is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. In the first parable, a shepherd who had 100 sheep lost one of them. And since every sheep was important to him, the shepherd left the 99 behind in the countryside to go and find that one—that one precious sheep. And when he found the one, he invited all his dear friends over to celebrate!

In the second parable, there was a woman who had 10 drachmas. A drachma was a Greek coin worth a day’s wages. This woman had a two-week paycheck. When she lost one of her coins, she turned her house upside down looking for that one lost coin. When she found it, she invited all her dear friends over to celebrate!

And what Jesus does is tell us a similar point in both of the parables – **⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent...there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.**” A party is thrown every time one sinner repents and comes to believe in him. Rejoicing!

Who did Jesus come to save? Jesus tells us when he called Matthew to discipleship, **“I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”** (Matt. 9:9-13) That’s you and me. We were all born in sin, but Christ sought us out in our baptism and made us his dear children. A party was thrown in heaven.

But think about the words of our lesson this morning. Haven’t we been like the sheep who have gone astray from the rest of the flock – from the rest of the believers? Maybe we’ve become lazy in our faith or even lost it? Maybe we get lackadaisical in our faith and question why we’re here? We need to confess those sins like Paul did in our second lesson this morning – saying that he was the **“worst of sinners.”** He recognized that nothing good lived in him – that his **“sinful nature was hostile to God.”**

He knew that he couldn’t do anything to gain favor with God – but that salvation comes only through Jesus. For our

laziness and even lack of faith, Jesus suffered the punishment we deserved on the cross. In God's eyes we are perfect. We are his dearly beloved sheep. The sheep that he goes after when we stray. The sheep he rejoices over when with his help – we return to the fold.

What are we worth to Jesus? We're priceless. The payment Jesus made to God on our behalf was his holy precious blood and his innocent suffering and death. Isn't it awesome to know that – how you are a treasure to God?

How much is your neighbor worth? When we look at others we need to have that same attitude of the woman of our parable who lost a coin and the shepherd who lost a sheep – how they eagerly looked for their lost belongings. It's easy for us to look at other people as sinners – and point out their faults and weaknesses – but we also need to think of them and regard them as blood, bought souls won by Christ.

Jesus Welcomes Sinners. Jesus welcomes me. Amen.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)