

September 11, 2016
Sermon for The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Luke 15:1-10

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Luke 15:1–10 (ESV)

¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³ So he told them this parable: ⁴ “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? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ 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.’ 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. ⁸ “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? ⁹ 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.’ ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Why do the Pharisees grumble when they see Jesus receiving sinners and eating with them?

Seriously?

Why do they even care?

Why does it concern them?

If Jesus wants to eat with certain people, so what? To each his own.

But, instead they grumble.

It might be helpful to understand these Pharisees a little better.

In their defense these Pharisees really did want to make God happy. In fact, there was in Jesus' day apparently an ongoing debate about what sort of person makes God the happiest. And there were two proposals.

Some Pharisees held to the opinion that the kind of person that makes God the happiest is the kind that has been basically righteous all his life, has always lived well, never had a major moral meltdown or failure. There was another camp, though, that believed God is actually happier still with a person who had lived a bad life and repented and come to the Lord.

Take, for instance, Joe and Stan. Joe was a good little boy, did his homework, his chores, married up, had well-adjusted children, gave some money to responsible charities, went to church, died, and was praised by all as a good guy. Stan, on the other hand, was a bad little boy. He didn't do his homework. He dropped out of school. He nursed addictive habits, live promiscuously, wasted resources. Until Stan, say, at age 32, hit rock bottom, turned his life around, kicked his habits, separated himself from evil, and decided to live for God from now on. In other words, Stan repented and became a good man. When he died, at his funeral, he was praised for how he had turned things around.

The Pharisees would debate, then, about whether Joe made God happier or whether Stan made God happier. Well, which side would Jesus agree with?

Would He be happier with Joe, who was a good boy all his life, or with Stan, who was a bad boy and then repented and turned into a good boy?

You know what we can tell from the Gospels? That Jesus wasn't especially happy with either of them. In fact, this is why the Pharisees grumbled at Jesus.

He wasn't attracting good people at all. He was attracting people while they were still bad. They didn't seem to even really have potential to become good. And He likes them; He permits them to come to Him without prerequisites or expectations, without probationary periods, without having to prove anything. And the Pharisees grumble about that.

So Jesus tells three parables designed to demonstrate how invested He is in recovering sinners for Himself. The parable of the one lost sheep, one lost coin, and then the prodigal son.

Jesus loves sinners and seeks them and dies for them. Today, we see is a picture of just how delighted the Lord is to save sinners. In each of the three parables, there's a party, and all are invited to rejoice. They are to rejoice . . . because He rejoices. His rejoicing cannot be contained; He wants others to share it with Him. You already understand that the Lord Jesus has saved you by His blood, but it's more than that. You bring Him joy.

We talk much about how the Lord is to be our joy, but did you know that *you* are the *Lord's* joy?

Let me clarify. You bring the Lord joy—your personality, your interests, your contributions, and so forth. But in these parables, these aren't what is said to bring the Lord joy, although they certainly do bring Him joy too. What brings Him joy here is when a person who is lost, wayward, and sinful repents. Jesus says, *"There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance"* (v 7).

You know how that's said in the original? The word "repents" is in the grammatical form we call the participle. It's a present active participle. That means it's an ongoing, durative kind of thing. So it's more literally translated,

“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner repenting than over ninety-nine righteous who don’t need repentance.”

Jesus wants repentant sinners who are continually repenting, not the kind who had to repent at one time, when they were age 32, but now are so good they don’t need to repent anymore.

For Jesus, both Joe and Stan, if they think they no longer need repentance, are lumped in with the ninety-nine. They do not bring joy to God.

But the kind of repentance that does bring him joy is the kind you have to keep having. You have to keep on repenting. Why? Because you keep on sinning. It’s a regular thing. So you need to keep repenting. But

The Lord rejoices, when sinners, you included, repent—especially when sinners *continually* repent.

See, this something that we really don’t expect. It makes no sense to us in our minds. Yet, this is what brings the Lord joy?

Every time we have to tell Him again that we’ve sinned and we’re sorry and want to be forgiven? Let’s say you have a counselor, and you’ve been assigned to this counselor for anger management. So every week you sit with her and report how you did.

Well, if you report to her that you did well, that you managed your emotions and didn’t yell or injure anyone, she’ll be happy. She might even rejoice. But, if you report that this week, once again, you lost your temper four times, yelled at people, and hit someone’s car with a bat, but you’re sorry, and this week, once again, you’re going to try harder . . . well, you know she’ll be disappointed. You’ll be reluctant to tell her because you don’t want her to be disappointed. When you report that you were good, she’s happy. When you report that you were bad, she’s disappointed.

But not so with the Lord. There is no happiness, no party thrown for the ninety-nine sheep.

But there is for the one who was lost and brought back again. And if that same sheep has a bad week next week, wanders off, and has to be found again, then once again, there will be another party, another rejoicing over the lost sheep who was lost and is found.

It's as if you said to the counselor, "I had a terrible week. I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I'll try harder next week," and the counselor rejoices! And then calls all her friends and family to rejoice with her that you failed, but you still kept your appointment.

It's not what you'd expect. But that is the Lord's reaction to your confession. It brings Him joy.

Have you broken the Commandments? Have you been grumbling and complaining about your life? Are you holding grudges against a friend or your boss or your dad or anyone? Do you entertain evil desires—looking at or doing things on the computer that you know you shouldn't? Have you snuck around or covered your tracks? Told lies to make yourself look better? Do you daydream about how much smarter you are than the president or the governor—or your Facebook® friends who say dumb things? Do you lose your temper? Yell at people and curse them in your car? Have you been angry with God because He hasn't done things the way you wanted Him too?

You do these things and mostly get away with them, so you think that must mean God doesn't mind or He just doesn't care to notice.

But He does notice. Your sins are damaging to people. They are an offense to God, and they are dangerous. You may not get caught (although you may!), but your sins always have consequences.

So, you are not Joe or Stan. You are not among the ninety-nine righteous. You are the lost sheep, the lost coin. You ought to repent. But not just because of the haunting catalog of sins that could be brought against you. Repent because heaven rejoices over you. Christ Jesus has paid for your sins by dying on the cross. God cannot hold them against you—He doesn't even want to hold them against you. He simply wants to have you.

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In fact, it's even more than that. It's not just that He wants you back. But when He finds you, even if it's the third time this week—or today!—that He had to find you, He isn't angry. He doesn't shake his head or give you a long lecture. He doesn't make you explain yourself. He doesn't think you're dumb or wonder when you'll ever learn. Rather, He, together with all of heaven, rejoices that you were lost but are found. He counts you and sees you as perfectly holy and innocent. And He doesn't keep score and worry that you're probably going to get lost again. He has died for you and removed all guilt from you, so there is now no condemnation—none—for you. He and His angels and the saints in heaven rejoice in your repentance and faith. Amen.

Adalyn a precious coin to God. As much as her parents love her, she is even more precious to God. He brought her, through her parents to the waters of Holy Baptism and made her His own. And as innocent as she looks today, one day, she too may stray. She will be a lost coin and God will move heaven and earth by His Holy Spirit to find her. As she grows in grace, in Sunday School and gathering with her fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, she too will come to know the joy of life and communion with her church family.

In closing, there were numerous precious coins lost on this date back in 2001. We lost them in tragedy but Jesus kept them all safe. He knew where they were and those that called upon His name as their Savior are not lost at all, they are with Him eternally in heaven.

We have that same assurance. You cannot run far enough away that you are beyond the Holy Spirit's reach nor can any tragedy removed you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. (John 10:28-29)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.