

Luke 15:1-10
St Mark – September 11, 2022
The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
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Adored by God

Each one of us is important. So important that when we repent, God and His angels are filled with joy. We are children of God and God loves us. Every one of us.

Our reading this morning is from the 15th chapter of Luke's gospel. It begins by telling us that,

“All the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus.

Tax collectors. The shunned and hated Roman collaborators.

The disciple and later apostle Matthew is possibly our most well-known tax collector. For those who have seen the series, *The Chosen*, you too may delight in the way he is portrayed.

His role brings to life the person who can seem remote as we read the stories of him in the Bible. In *The Chosen* he is awkward, detailed, and shunned by his fellow Jews. Though not by any means embraced by the Romans he is favored above all other Jews by these Roman occupiers of his land. Matthew is portrayed as an outcast among his fellow Jews.

He has money, fine clothes, plenty of food, but not a community to care for and to be cared by. His father has disowned him.

This tax collector (I believe all tax collectors of that day) is an outcast.

Next it is sinners who the Pharisees and the scribes are grumbling about when they say,

"This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Jesus does welcome sinners... every one of us. In fact, he said so himself when earlier in Luke's gospel Jesus said,

“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”
(5:32)

The meaning of the word ‘repentance’ or ‘repent’ is more complex than we often realize.

I think of repenting as stopping some behavior. Turning away from my behaviors that are not pleasing to God. The Greek word (*metanoia*) translated as 'repent' is much richer than my cursory understanding.

This word translated as 'repent' speaks of a fundamental change in us. A transformation in how we see the world and how we see ourselves. It calls us to a new way of loving others and a new way of loving God.

I shouldn't just stop gossiping. I should no longer want to gossip. I shouldn't only give financial support to a worthy charity when I'm asked. I should search out those in need and find ways to lessen their struggle.

Each week and for some of us more often we confess to God our wrong doing. In that confession, the one we will pray together this morning, we acknowledge our unpleasing words and deeds and we acknowledge those good things that we have neglected to do.

We confess that we have not loved God with our entire being and that we have not fully loved those with whom we share this planet.

We affirm to God that we humbly repent and ask his mercy and forgiveness and then we give the reason for our request; that we may delight in His will and walk in His ways.

And there it is! The transformation. That going forward we will delight in God's will for us and walk in the ways He leads us.

That we will fundamentally change how we see the world and how we see ourselves. That we take will on a new way of loving others and a new way of loving God.

Yes, we are remorseful for our sins, but more than that we are called to go forward. To go forward as different people. To be transformed by the loving Grace of God.

We come back to this confession and plea over and over again. This transformation is not easy for us. It takes effort and humility. It takes discipline. It takes love.

It takes encouragement. Encouragement from our sisters and brothers in Christ; from our Christian community. Encouragement and support from the community that surrounds us here today.

It takes encouragement from those who will join our Christian community in the days and years to come.

Now let's return to this morning's gospel reading and remember the two parables.

First, we hear about the one lost sheep out of a heard of 100. We are asked, who wouldn't "go after the one that is lost until he finds it?"

Shepherders care for their sheep.

Our next parable tells us of a woman who loses one of her ten coins and searches her house until she finds the one that was lost.

These coins are valuable.

The next and final words of the 15th chapter of Luke's gospel are not included in this morning's reading. These words are another parable. They tell us of a father who loses one of his two sons. When his son who was lost to sin returns the father is overwhelmed with joy.

This father loves his children.

Each of these three parables ends by telling us how great the rejoicing was when these precious things were found, returned, recovered. We too greatly rejoice when something precious finds its way back to us.

I believe that Jesus is making the point that when any one of us is lost, lost by giving into the evil that tempts us, we are not forgotten. And who among us has never been lost? Who among us has never been in need of repentance?

Each one of us is important. So important that when we repent, God and His angels are filled with joy. We are children of God and God loves every one of us.

Jesus is telling us that when we turn away from sin we bring joy to the angels of God.

Jesus is telling us in all three of these parables that we are loved, that we are cared for and valuable, that we are precious. That God adores us.

There is something else about the way Luke records these three parables.

The first parable talks of 100 sheep and one of them lost. The second talks of 10 coins and one of them lost. The final parable speaks of 2 sons and one of them lost.

It doesn't matter how many souls God holds as His repentant children. When even one soul remains in Satan's control God is longing and beckoning for that soul to come back to Him.

When we return, when we truly repent, when we ask God to forgive us I pray that we will give into the depth of the repentance Jesus calls us to. That going forward we will delight in God's will for us and walk in the ways He leads us.

I pray that we will transform. That we will fundamentally change how we see the world and how we see ourselves. That we will take on a new way of loving others. That we will be strengthened by the encouragement we find in our Christian community.

That we will find and a new way of loving God. Loving God with our whole being. Immersed in God, being His and His alone.

When we return to the loving grace of The Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit that we will answer God's call to go forward as a different person and be transformed by the loving Grace of God.

I pray that we will never forget that each one of us is important to God. That we will remember that when we repent God and His angels are filled with joy.

I pray that we will always remember that we are children of God and God loves every one of us.