

Sermon For Pentecost 14 – 2022

Seeking the One

Luke 15:1-10

Grace, Peace, and Mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus asks in our gospel for the day, “What man of you having a hundred sheep if he has lost one does not leave the ninety-nine...or what woman having ten coins, if she loses one...” Go look for it until it is found?

I might answer this question like this. It is only one sheep. What is the big deal? You still have nine-nine. It just might turn up sooner or later. If it turns up or you find it will just wander off again. Anyhow the flock is still going to grow. It is just one sheep.

It is just one coin. I still have nine. Again, it just might turn up sooner or later. It is just one coin.

This is the way of man. It is not the way of God. Each one is valuable and precious. Not with sheep or coins. This is the way God is with sinners like you and me. He does not want anyone lost.

Maybe it does not seem like this way. The Bible is full of big words and ideas. “God so Loved the World.” Jesus feeds the five thousand and later the four thousand. Three thousand were baptized on the Day of Pentecost. The book of Revelation pictures heaven as multitude that no one can count. So, it could be easy to see how one could get lost in the crowd.

Then we have these stories of Jesus where His focus is on the one individual. Jesus goes to the house of an official whose daughter is ill. He goes just for her. Along the way a woman who has been bleeding for twelve years touches Jesus. Jesus stops just for her. He speaks kindly to her a desperate and scared little lamb. He heals her before proceeding to the little girl to raise her from the dead. Jesus spends one on one time with Nicodemus at night. He stops at a well in Samaria to spend one on one time with a Samaritan woman. Jesus is there just for the one. The Scriptures are chalk full of accounts these accounts. With Jesus no one gets lost in the crowd.

But I want to get lost in the crowd. I want blend in with the crowd. Like in school hoping the teacher does not call on me. Like at work you do not want the boss to give you more work to do. At Church too, I will try to blend in with the congregation. I certainly do not want others to know my troubles, my fears, my doubts, and uncertainties. I can for one hour make it appear that I have my act together and show them what a good Christian I am. I can try to pretend that all is well.

How is that working? Not very well. My sins and guilt still remain until they are dealt with. And the Good News is that Jesus came to deal with them. Jesus from whom no secretes are hid knows me and He knows you, all of your thoughts and desires. No one else may know when one sheep wanders or goes astray, but Jesus does. Jesus know each one by name. And one missing penny from your pocketbook may not be noticed, unless you are Jesus. That is why Jesus came. He came to search for the lost. Not particularly for sheep or a coin, but for every hiding and lost sinner. To find them. To love them. To forgive them. To retore them back to God. And to care for them. He does this for you too.

This is what Jesus is doing today in the Gospel. Hanging out with sinners. He is loving them. He is forgiving them. He is caring for them. That is why the scribes and pharisees are grumbling. They thought Jesus was not hallowing God's name by hanging out with them. But is exactly what Jesus was doing by hanging out with these people. Jesus is sharing with them the kind of God we have. He was sharing God's attitude toward sinners. That He wants none to be lost. He wanted them and us know to that He loves us not because we do good things and our feeling that we need no forgiveness. No, Jesus lets us know that we have a God who loves you because you precious in His sight and that He sent His one and only begotten Son to lay down His life for them and for you personally.

That is what brings our Lord so much joy. Not the Ninety-nine righteous who need no forgiveness (Let me know if you ever find even one of the 99). It is that one found person who repents that bring our Lord so much joy. There is much joy in heaven over the one found sinner who is found by God and finds forgiveness and love and hope in Him alone. That person is never lost in the crowd in the eyes of God. That one person, cared for and died for by our Lord.

That is the love that changed St. Paul. Paul never blended in as Pharisee. He stood out. He was the Pharisee of Pharisees. The best of the best. When it came to keeping the law, He stood out in his dedication and zeal. But Paul in the eyes of God was lost. And by God's grace Paul was found. Jesus came to Him and saved him. Still Paul could not blend in after being found in His lostness by Jesus. Now as Paul confesses in our Second lesson, He stands out. This time, not as the best. But as the foremost of sinners. To such a one Jesus searched and found Paul, to love him, and have mercy on him. Not because he was perfect, but because he was lost until Jesus found him.

There is yet another account and of seeking and searching that needs to be brought up, especially today. That searching began on this day 21 years ago.

Many of us can recall that day when the first responders charged into the burning World Trade Center Towers and Pentagon after being struck by airplanes piloted by terrorists. They went in seeking survivors and the lost and after the towers fell going through rubble seeking possible survivors and bodily remains. Many remains were not found because they were indiscernible in all that rubble. Later that week a cross made from two steel beams was erected on the pile of rubble where once stood towers. This all points us to our gospel which from Luke 15:1-10 where Jesus tells of a shepherd and woman seeking a lost sheep and lost coin. It is Jesus who came to seek lost sinners. The cross that stood at the tragic site in New York points us to the Holy Cross of Christ that stood on another pile of rubble outside Jerusalem. It is there Christ finds us in our sins and tragedies and pains to rescue us by letting Himself be buried under the rubble of our sins. Where the towers in New York once stood are a large hole. May the large hole point us to the tomb of Easter. Yet that hole many look into where the towers once stood is quite different than the tomb of Easter. The crucified Jesus was not found there by the women who came searching for Him. Jesus is not missing or dead, but He is risen. So when Our Lord comes again, He will know where everybody is, no matter how badly sin has ravaged the body. He will raise them up on the last day.

May this day give us hope grounded in God's promises that we have Savior who searches for the lost until He finds them and when finds them, He rejoices with all of Heaven and throws a party over one sinner who repents.

May this bring us the peace of God which passes all understanding guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.