

Gospel Lesson for the Week

September 16, 2007

16th Sunday after Pentecost

Please Read [Luke 15:1-10](#)

Also read [Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28](#); [Psalm 14](#); [1 Timothy 1:12-17](#)

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'

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.

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

Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Luke 15:1-10

Joy in Heaven

The usual cast of characters:

Tax collectors and sinners, listening,
and Pharisees and scribes, grumbling,
and Jesus in their midst, telling stories.

He told them about loss.

When you lose something of value
it's almost like losing a friend.
And sinners may not seem of- much value
to scribes and Pharisees,
but to Jesus
they are persons of sacred worth,
and need a shepherd to go searching,
and a place to come home to.

He told them about Joy –

The joy of finding something of value
and something lost,
something as small as a silver coin
something as significant as a lost lamb,
Joy to be shared with friends and neighbors,
Joy that resounds in heaven
when one of God's lost sheep is found.
After all,

if a lady who's lost a silver coin
and a shepherd who's lost
one of his flock of a hundred
can be happy when the lost is found,
don't you suppose that all heaven sings
when the wanderer returns?

And I guess that you and I
can get in on the joy and laughter too,
whichever side we're on,
the lost or the searchers,
the sinners or the saints.
And we too can share the joy of heaven.
That is, unless we just want
to sit back and grumble,
like scribes and Pharisees.

These two parables are part of Jesus' wonderful trilogy that ends with the story of the Prodigal Son. Consider this third parable in your week's reflection, and notice what a marvelous rebuke to his critics is found in Jesus' account of the Elder Brother. Did I say rebuke? No, it is more like an open door, an invitation to come in and join the party. That invitation is for all of us who tend to sit in judgement of our brothers and sisters.

-- rvc