

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

LOST AND FOUND

Luke 15:1-10

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost Analysis by Bill White

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

3 So he told them this parable: 4 "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? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 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.' 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 of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 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 in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

NOTE: This Sunday our congregation is participating in a

relatively new (I think) “National Back to Church” program. If the campaign is successful we should have a number of “inactive” and “de-churched” folks worshiping with us this week, or in the language of this week’s text, we may very well have a number of “lost sheep” and “lost coins” worshiping with us. The “National Back to Church” campaign is one effort of the Body of Christ to seek and save the lost. Thus the context of the crossing below.

FYI, there are a number of excellent crossings on this text with the Pharisees as the “persons with a problem” archived at crossings.org.

DIAGNOSIS: LOST AND HOPELESS

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Lost*

There are many folks in the world today who for various reasons have wandered-off from the body of Christ. Based on their life styles and priorities, they would be labeled “tax collectors and sinners” by modern-day Pharisees. These folks are by definition “lost” to Jesus Christ.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Lost and Don’t Know It*

Not only are they lost, they do not know they are lost! They do not know they are missing-out on the true blessings of this life that come through faith in Jesus Christ. Because their faith is in other gods, they do not experience the blessed assurance of knowing the true and ultimate meaning of life, the purpose of life, the love, peace, joy, contentment, confidence, hope, and promise of the life grounded in Christ.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Hopelessly Lost*

Even worse, if our “lost” friends and neighbors are not “found” they will be “lost” unto death. Not only will they have missed-

out on the abundant life available in Christ here and now, they will die hopeless, eternally separated from Christ.

PROGNOSIS: FOUND AND HOPE-FILLED

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Hope in Christ*

It is for the lost ones that Almighty God came in Jesus the Christ. Jesus tells us in John 11:10, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." 1 Timothy 1:15 proclaims, "... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...", and in Philippians 2:6ff we read that Jesus, "...who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross."

By his death on the cross and glorious resurrection Jesus has trumped the forces that lead to "lostness." He died and rose again so that all who are lost in sin and death may be found and given new life everlasting.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. That was his mission—and it still is! Jesus Christ—through his body the Church—is still seeking and saving the lost.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Found and Know It*

One of the ways Jesus is still at work seeking and saving the lost is through Word and sacrament. Lost sheep and coins do not repent and return. They are found. Thus it is that the faithful people of God in Christ Jesus are intentional about going out into their communities and inviting the lost sinners to "come and see" Jesus and dine with him. Yes, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." In this encounter the "lost" become aware of their lost-ness, and Jesus "finds" them, offering to

exchange their lost-ness for found-ness, offering to rescue and restore them through faith.

Those who receive this gift of faith in Jesus Christ experience hope replacing hopelessness, the joy of divine insight into the true meaning and purpose of life, and the blessed assurance of daily life grounded in the promises of Christ as well as eternal life in the glorious presence of Christ!

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Living the Life of the Found*

Moreover, those who were lost but now are found are graced with the joyous calling of joining other disciples of Christ out in the world seeking and saving the lost. For this there is indeed much joy in heaven and in the presence of the angels of God!