

# Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

## SEARCH AND RESCUE AT ALL COSTS

Luke 15: 1-10

### Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost Analysis by Mark Marius

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

3So he told them this parable: 4Which 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? 5When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6And 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.' 7Just 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.

8Or 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? 9When 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.' 10Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

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## **DIAGNOSIS: Gone Missing**

### **Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Losing Sight of Each Other***

If someone is missing they are considered lost. The missing may recognize they are lost, since they cannot find their own way back. They need help, they need to be rescued. Sinners are people who get lost by making wrong choices, following the wrong path, and winding up in places no one who respects God's law would venture (ref. Exod. 32:7-8). But for those who strive to stay on the right path, to do the right thing, organizing a rescue mission seems out of the question. Why should we righteous spend their time and energy finding sinners, when sinners haven't used their time and energy to avoid sin like us. They are not worth our pursuit.

### **Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Losing Sight of the Law***

We expect Christ, the ultimate obeyer of God's law, to rub elbows and break bread with those who share the same objectives. So when we see him pursuing the lost sinner we get quite offended. How disrespectful for Christ to ignore the version of God's law we follow, and go after the sinner who has done the same. However what Christ really points to is the differing objectives we have of God's law. We, who strive to keep the law, do so for the sake of our selves, not for the sake of God. But Christ is more interested in what God wants for his creation than what his creation wants for itself. So if Christ is choosing to eat with sinners what does it say about us kosher folk? We choose to believe that since Christ is not for us than he must be against us and God.

### **Step 3: Advanced Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Losing Sight of God***

Unfortunately, if we are against Christ then we are also against

God, because God is clearly for his Son. He even told us so in Luke 3:22, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." So if we are truly followers of God's law then we would follow what is pleasing to him rather than pleasing to us. And having stopped following God, without even realizing it, we remain lost. So if we have lost God then we too need someone to rescue us. And if we are grumbling as much as the Pharisees, we will not be able to hear what God speaks to us through Jesus. We are as good as dead.

## **PROGNOSIS: Found Alive**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** : *Gaining Sight of Christ*

That's why Jesus is so good and doesn't just give us more laws to follow, or even better laws to follow. He uses every resource he has to find the lost. He gives his very life and goes to the depths of hell to save us from being lost forever. His resurrection assures all the lost, those who know it and those who don't, that they will be found alive in heaven. We are assured that the forgiveness that enables us to repent and follow God, will be a cause for great rejoicing.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** : *Gaining Sight of Each Other*

In the glory of the resurrection Jesus calls us together to welcome all who were lost. Community has been restored in Christ. There is no longer the missing and lost, only the found. Our meals are now eaten together. And together we feast on the body and blood of Christ, which keeps us fortified in grace and gathered together in the fold.

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution)** : *Gaining Sight of God's Kingdom*

We now realize, as Christ does, that finding a lost coin adds value to the purse, just as one more sheep adds to the strength

of the fold. This now becomes our mission. We are free to use all of the resources God has given us to find the lost. We no longer keep God's law for own sake, grumbling as we go, because we now gladly follow what is pleasing to Him and that is offering forgiveness to repenters. That forgiveness leads to a joyful life on earth and in heaven.