**Christ Receives Sinners**

**Luke 15:1-10**

**Trinity III – 07.03.2022**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”*

Did you notice what kind of people are drawing near to listen to Jesus? Who is coming to hear him preach? Tax collectors and sinners! In that day, it was like saying, “Prostitutes, junkies, drunkards – the dregs of society.” They were also those who were all too familiar with their sinfulness. They were those whose guilt weighed heavy upon their heart and soul.

Do you understand who it is that complains, “This man receives sinners!” Do you comprehend who is astonished that He not only receives them (He is not only friendly with them and talks with them) He eats with them!?!? Do you realize who is scandalize by the actions of ***THIS MAN*** - this rabbi and teacher?

It is the Pharisees and scribes who are offended by Jesus’ actions – those who are supposed to be leaders in regard to religious matters.

They were “members in good standing” in the church. They were the upright citizens, the ones everybody called the “good Christians.” They were better than the ones they called ‘sinners.’ They were in good standing in God’s kingdom – or so they thought!

Jesus knew what they were thinking, so Jesus tells the two parables in our text – one about a lost sheep, the other about a lost coin. After the first He states, “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.” And after the second one, He says, “I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Jesus’ parables point out that only the repentant bring joy in heaven. His parable are actually asking, “You scribes and Pharisees think you are so good? You think you have done it so well? You think you do not need to repent and come before God begging for His mercy? You believe you can face God on your own, that you are good enough? You bring no joy in heaven.”

How often are you the Pharisees and scribes? You ***KNOW*** what terrible sinners others are, but you have a highly inflated idea of how good you are. You may confess you are sinners, but you are not as bad as the really bad sinners. You know your neighbors, you know how vile and evil some of the really bad sinners are, and in comparison, you are like saints.

Your only problem is, you believe saints are those who have done something, or lived in such a manner that they have earned God’s grace. That is kind of like a few of my friends who joke, “Pauline has certainly earned her sainthood, having had to put up with you for all these years.”

We think we are pretty good. We think some others are pretty good too. They are “good Christians” because of how they live their lives, just like you – another good Christian.

Of course, there are those certain neighbors who have lived in a less that moral manner. In fact, their sinfulness may have hurt us, or done us wrong. These *sinners* deserve our contempt and disrespect – at least ***we have*** earned God’s grace, for we would never do anything like what they have done.

Jesus is accused of receiving sinners, for those whom He receives and eats with are much worse than the Pharisees and the scribes.

So, Jesus explains the situation to them, that God and all His angels rejoice over sinners who repent. He implies that there is more joy over one sinner who repents than there is over countless righteous persons who do not feel the need to repent. In fact, there is a later time in Christ’s sojourn where He weeps over Jerusalem – He weeps for those who feel they have earned God’s grace and refuse to repent.

By the way, there are none who do not need to repent. All are sinners! Every single person needs to repent. The Pharisees and scribes feel they do ***NOT*** need to repent. They are positive that they are superior to those who they label as sinners. Many see themselves as superior Christians compared to the sinners of the world.

What is even more important to us today is that when the Pharisee and scribes, when you and I feel we are more deserving of the gifts of God’s grace than are others, we have a problem. Such an attitude is a serious problem. What is that problem?

When you or I think that we are more deserving of God’s grace than is someone else, upon what do we base that opinion? If that opinion is based upon our own ideas, thinking that somehow we deserve God’s grace because we are better than they are, then we have tied God’s gracious activity toward us upon our works. Such thinking believes that God’s grace toward us is based upon our goodness. As the Scripture reveals in the Psalms and in Romans, there are none that are good, no not one. (Ps. 14:3, 53:3, Rom. 3:10, 12)

Each of us is a sinner. Each of us needs to live in contrition and repentance. God’s grace toward us is not given to us on account of our goodness but, if I may say it this way, because of our badness. Framed is Christian language – God’s grace is given because of His love, and it necessary to us because of our sinfulness.

If any could be good, there would be no need for God’s gracious mercy. Jesus would not have needed to come and die – if any could be good. You might say that the greater the sinner, the greater the need for God’s grace. But even the idea of greater or lesser sinners is a misunderstanding that is brewed up in the minds of people corrupted by sin.

It is like this. God sent His only begotten Son to die for sinners. He came, as He said, to seek and to save that which was lost. Those who think they are better, or even good enough, do not see themselves as the lost. They think they are not “sinners in need” of forgiveness. They may believe in Jesus, but they do not feel a desperate need for a Savior.

When someone feels they are better than others – when you feel that you are better than other – you are claiming that you have less of a need for the forgiveness purchased by Christ than do other.

When you believe that some are not as worthy God’s grace and mercy as we are, it is not that we have a lesser view of them than we should. Instead, the greater problems is that we have an inflated view of who we are. Thinking such, we are bordering on believing that we have no need of repentance.

The Pharisees and scribes complained, “This man receives sinners and eats with them."

Dear friends of God in Christ Jesus, listen to these words, “This man, Christ, receives sinners – (pause) and feeds them.”

This man – Christ – receives sinners, He receives me. He sought me out and rescued me. He came for me and found me. He called me by name and made me His own. His Spirit repented me – He grants me forgiveness and give me new life.

This man – Christ – receives sinners, He receives me. He speaks to me, He absolves me of my sinfulness, and comforts me with His Word.

This man – Christ – receives sinners, He receives me. He receives, and does more that eat with me – He feeds me! He give me to eat of His own flesh, pierced for my transgressions. He pours between my lips the very blood He shed to grant me life and salvation.

This man – Christ – receives sinners. He receives you! He feeds you! Thanks be to God for His marvelous grace to us sinners, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.