**Reflection for March 7, 2021 – Lost Coins and The Lowly Sparrow**

**Based on Luke 15:8-10, Matthew 10:26-31**

**Prayer:**

If my memory recall is close to accurate, we left Langley for Ft. St. John on January 15, 1980. It was a new adventure as I was just starting my a career with Health Canada. Leiann was 2 and a half, Lenore was 7 and a half months pregnant, and all our belongings were in a moving Van somewhere.

 We stopped in Quesnel at the Dairy Queen for a break and to let the dog out. We didn’t stop long. Soon Leiann is packed back in the car, Lenore dry’s off the dog’s wet feet (there was fresh snow is Quesnel) and off we go.

 My first appointment was actually with my new boss in Prince George so we stopped there for the night. We were just getting settled in the motel when Lenore gasps, “where is my ring?” Her engagement ring is missing! “Missing, how can your ring be missing?” Well clearly it was not on her finger.

 So out I go to the parking lot and pulled the car apart. I looked everywhere, in between the seats, under the mats, in every nook and cranny. Nope, nada, no ring. Lenore of course is really upset.

 We thought about it and concluded that the most likely scenario was that it fell off her finger when she picked up the dog and dried off its feet during our Quesnel stop. I called the Dairy Queen and they had no missing ring. I called the RCMP and they said, if it had been found, given this was Quesnel, the likelihood it would be returned would be slim. You can imagine that this was not helpful news!

 Lenore is more distraught now. What to do? Well only one thing I could do, go back to Quesnel and look. (As I recall Lenore was not really in favour of that), but I decided to go anyway.

 I really felt the need to at least try, so I was up early and left PG back for Quesnel. I had an appointment at 9 so off I went in good time. I remember running into a grouse on the way which made me reconsider my trip but I kept going. Arriving in Quesnel at the DQ it was still dark. What did I think I was going to see?

I had some recall about where we parked the day before so I parked there again and had a good look around, nothing. I decided to back the car up a bit, turned on the lights full beam and scanned the area. And, as I am sure you guessed the outcome by now, to my astonishment I saw something sparkling in the snow. I walked over, bent down, and picked up Lenore’s ring stuck in the snow. Thank goodness for diamonds, that is what was sparkling.

This event immediately jumped into my head when I read “The Parable of the Lost Coin.” ***‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost,’***says the woman. Rejoice with me said Lenore as I received one of my biggest ever bear hugs. Immediately after, she called her mother to report the good news as well. And there was rejoicing and probably a “thank God” shared too.

 I wonder if that is the feeling one experiences when after weeks, months or years of self-doubt and self-criticism, a voice comes to them saying, “you know that you are special don’t you?” “You know that you don’t have to try and prove anything, just be who you are.” A voice says “don’t believe all that negative stuff you are hearing, you are loved.”

 I wonder if the itinerant residents in the shelter at WUC, and those who benefit from the “In from the Cold Program,” are getting that message. We care about you, you are just as precious as anyone else. Maybe that is a message received by someone looking for a few coins with cap in hand outside Starbucks. Perhaps that is the feeling someone gets when a volunteer at the BB puts their necessities in a bag and says, “there is no charge for that.”

Perhaps within the we, comes another message. It might be subliminal, and it could take a while to recognize. But it is there, “hello you, God here, just wanting to let you know that you are cared about, you are special, you are a child of the universe.” “No matter what happens to you, know that you always have a place of refuge, I will always hold you in the palm of my hand.” The voice says “Come in and be found.” **The missing coin finds its way back into a pocket, the missing ring finds it way back onto a finger.**

***29Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.***

What a brilliant and inspirational passage that is. The reference to sparrows relates to “temple sacrifice.” Sparrows, or doves were purchased in temples in Jesus’ time and given as sacrifices to God. The purchase price had to be low so everyone could afford it. Sparrows were cheap and as this reading suggests, not valued very much.

Jesus compares his disciples to sparrows.

The world may view you as sparrows, not of much value, not of much consequence, but that is a mistruth. That is a falsehood. You are valued more than many sparrows regardless of what you may hear. “Even the hairs on your head are counted.”I particularly like that line!Even the hairs on my Chrome Dome!

Even the most inconsequential thing about you is loved and cherished.

“What, even the blemish on my face or the fact I have put on a few extra pounds?” Yep, even that. The fact that I don’t live in the best neighbourhood or drive a fancy car doesn’t make me “less than?” “Nope.” The fact that I have to go to the food bank once in a while to supplement my needs won’t make people think less of me? Well it is not supposed to and as far as God is concerned, nope again. And in both our readings for today that Shirley Mae shared for us, Jesus is saying no as well.

Jesus is saying welcome. Come in and simply be who you need to be. Come in and be as if you were a lost coin, a very very valued lost coin and know that you are now found and blessed. Know that you are valued for every dimple and everything you might think is an imperfection.

Two seemingly worthless sparrows fall from the sky and God notices says Jesus. Live your life that way and resist the temptation to let yourself be judged.

We are reminded as we walk through Lent with Jesus that this is our ministry too. Loving one another as God and Jesus loves us seems simple enough, but it can be a challenge.

Let go of the anger you feel when someone cuts you off the highway or the frustration you feel when an individual butts in front of you in the grocery line. Perhaps you have heard enough about “Indigenous Reconciliation” efforts or media reviews about the “Black Lives Matter” movement.

Try to be patient and keep listening with an open heart. Perhaps you might be tempted to disparage the street person passed out in the alcove of a local store. He or she might seem like a lowly sparrow. Remember that individual is special and loved too.

We can be so tough on ourselves can’t we. I’m not very good and this or that. I am not accomplished. I am not living up to my expectations and I don’t think I am living up to other’s either.

When you catch yourself thinking that way, remember that you are cherished in ways you cannot imagine. Every hair on your head is blessed and every breath you take is gift. Pass that on to others and if someone you know appears lost, let them know Holy Love is always near.

Amen and Thanks for Listening this Morning.