

Sermon for September 11 – 2022 Pentecost 13 – Luke 15:1-10

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing and acceptable to you O Lord.

I have to tell you there's something that seems to be a regular occurrence these days. I'm a roller when I sleep and for some reason every morning, I wake up to find my glasses missing from my nightstand. Now imagine not being able to see clearly and searching for a pair of glasses under a dark bed. It's so frustrating.

Those of you that are puzzle doers may have had a similar experience. You start your puzzle at the border and work towards the centre connecting all the pieces admiring your work, only to find as you finish that there are a piece or two missing. You search hi and low, flip the box, move chairs and search the floor with no luck. So you pack it up to try another.

Today we hear the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin. There is a lot of searching. Again we hear that Jesus again has been eating with tax collectors and sinners. Like always the Pharisees and rulers didn't appreciate this. It put their power at risk. Who might they lose control of if Jesus keeps welcoming all. Theoretically they could lose all of their power.

Hearing the Pharisees grumblings, Jesus proceeds to tell the story of the lost sheep. So as the story goes the shepherd is watching his flock and while doing so discovers that one has gone missing. Rather than the shepherd saying, "Well, not much I can do about that one," he says, "I must find her and keep her safe." So the shepherd left the herd who were sticking together by themselves. At the risk of attack

from wolves and wild animals the shepherd leaves the 99 to go to the one. What happens when she is found? The shepherd lifts the lamb over his shoulders and proclaims rejoice! Come let us celebrate!

Jesus continues and tells the story of woman and the lost coin. She loses one of ten coins. Each coin is worth 10 drachmas, a day's wages. She lights a lamp and searches high and low for the coin until she finds it. Rather than save it she calls all of her friends together to celebrate and have a party. The woman speaks, "Just so I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin can be looked at from two perspectives, God searches for us because he loves us unconditionally and God hopes for us that as we grow to know his love that we might respond to such love and celebrate accordingly.

Jesus' followers in the parables listened quite attentively to what Jesus had to teach them. They watched as he spoke before the authorities. I wonder what they were thinking as they listened ---, "Who does this guy think he is?" or "I'm one of those sheep. Which one though?" "What about the coins? I am more valuable than a coin." Anything could've been going through their mind. One thing is for certain. Jesus wasn't an easy person to understand. Not all of his parables were simple.

Close your eyes for a minute and imagine, take a deep breath, listen. Do you hear it? It's Jesus speaking to us. Now turn to the person beside you look at them. Do you see Jesus in them? It's not easy to see or hear the presence of Jesus among us. It just isn't. Maybe we don't notice him at all but Jesus is there.

Like the simple lamb that had wandered away from the flock, Jesus searches for us. To renew us. To give us strength. To motivate. To respond. He says, “Hold on little one. Come this way. Change your way.”

We cannot do anything to tell Jesus where we already are on our faith journey. But it is through baptism we are loved and that God finds us. He chooses to love us unconditionally in grace and in baptism. The lone lamb was not calling out for Jesus. The coin did not stop and say “here I am.” They were found.

What I can say is this. We are a lost humanity. This world is broken in many ways. Trouble breaks relationships with God. God desires for us and the world to take a look at ourselves and ask how we can reconcile my relationship with God. How can we respond in love and give thanks for what God has done for us?

Being loved by Jesus requires a response and it is risky. Think about it, how many times have I stood here in the pulpit and asked you what “safety net” are you willing to leave behind to welcome people that are different than you? As we heard last week discipleship is costly. At the same time, it’s wonderful to know that people who have not stepped foot in the door of the church before are welcomed, recognized for who they are, and often introduced by a member to me. That is rejoicing in the lost being found!

We’re a collective of believers that make up the body of Christ. We do not exist alone. Jesus has claimed us in baptism.

Let me tell you a story. Recently somewhere I saw a black and white picture of ten hockey players, five Toronto Maple Leafs and five Montreal Canadiens, all on their

hands and knees in a corner. As I read the caption it explained that everyone was bent over, looking for someone's contact that had fallen out. Pretty cool. I imagine when they found the lense the crowd rejoiced and the game moved on.

Because we are loved freely and unconditionally as both a collective family of God and as individuals God rejoices! We are found! Let's rejoice and celebrate! Let's rejoice and welcome the stranger! Let's search for the lost! Let's find them and bring them to know God's goodness! Let's allow God power to work in us and through in the name of Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Amen.