

The 14th Sunday after Pentecost
“The great joy of finding the lost!”

Luke 15:1-7

September 14, 2025

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this 14th Sunday after Pentecost is from Luke 15:1-7.

“Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. 2 And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’ 3 So He spoke this parable to them, saying: 4 ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 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 which was lost!’ 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

So far the text:

Jesus often spoke in parables - short stories which we can easily identify with – in order to convey His spiritual truths that all people need to hear. In this chapter of Luke 15 – we have three parables which speak of the same theme – being lost – and being found. We have the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, which is not included in our Gospel reading but is good for all of us to read on our own.

And in all three of these parables, we come to know these unbroken truths – first that all humanity is lost ...lost because of sin...eternally separated from God... unable to change one’s lostness and find one’s way back to a perfect relationship with God. That’s the first truth – man’s lost condition ever since the fall of Adam and Eve.

But there is a second truth, which we hear of today and which describes who our God is. It is a glorious truth! It is a loving truth! For we come to know our God as the One who

fervently seeks out the lost that they may be found and enjoy all the pleasures of His Kingdom – peace, love, joy, and eternal bliss with the One True Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who cares for them so much that He willingly rescued them by laying down His life for His sheep.

We see our searching and saving God immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden...calling for them, searching for them... reproofing them for their sin...that they would repent of their disobedience...and most of all, giving them salvation in the promise of the coming Savior who would crush the serpent's head, the devil, and establish peace for all people. We hear this first Gospel message in Genesis 3:15 – God's judgement spoken to the serpent.

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

That there is enmity, hate, between the devil's seed, his offspring – all unbelievers bound up in his kingdom of lies and death, and the woman's offspring – the Seed, Jesus Christ. That enmity against Jesus is very evident in our text. And the hate carries over to all believers in her Seed.

“And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”

The pharisees had no love for Jesus, but utter contempt. We heard in chapter 14 how they desired to trap Jesus and accuse Him of healing on the Sabbath. They didn't care about the man with dropsy. They didn't care about the tax collectors and sinners.

Those who are of the devil have no love for others because they do not know the love and mercy of Jesus. And our nation was rocked this week at the news of the martyrdom of one of Jesus' sheep, one of Jesus followers who dedicated his life to reaching young people with the truth of God's Word, His Law that can't be changed and His forgiving Gospel for all sinners. It was a message that the devil wanted to silence. A 22-year-old silenced Charlie Kirk with a high-powered rifle.

But Charlie, by the grace of God, in his belief in Jesus, was received into heaven where he sings with the angels and rejoices with the saints in heaven. For Jesus sinners doth receive! And the message of truth that Charlie proclaimed continues to be proclaimed through others as Charlie now rests from his labors.

Matthew 16:18

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”

On this faith, Peter’s faith in Jesus, Charlie’s faith in Jesus, your faith in Jesus, He builds His church. And the devil cannot prevail against it. He is defeated!

Jesus healed the man with dropsy and showed that mercy triumphs the law. The Sabbath laws of not working on this rest day pointed to the Jesus who gives true rest to the conscience from the condemnation of sin. **Mark 2:27 “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.”** Jesus’ mercy always triumphs over the law! Jesus fulfilled the law by His perfect life and wants to give this freedom from the law to all people.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” That’s how Jesus concluded chapter 14 as we heard last week. And the tax collectors and sinners were listening. They were being found by Jesus. They were repenting of their sins and receiving the Good News that there was hope for them! Jesus was receiving sinners and eating with them!

Jesus wants all of us who have ears to listen and repent of our sins and know that He loves us! Jesus receives you also with His all-embracing love and mercy! And He invites you to His table to eat with Him and receive His body and blood for your forgiveness!

The Pharisees rejected Jesus and His mercy. Jesus wanted to save them, but instead of hearing Him, they fervently strove to do away with “This Man”. They plotted and worked evil until they accomplished their goal – the murder of an innocent Man on Calvary. But by Jesus’ death, He won forgiveness for all the lost of this world, including the Pharisees.

Yes, the Pharisees who believed they did not need to repent, were included in the 99 sheep who believed they were righteous by their own works. For all men are lost and need to repent.

Yes, we can easily identify with these parables of lostness. We’ve all experienced lostness in different degrees. Maybe you lost your keys, your phone, your wallet or purse, or your glasses. We’re always forgetting where we put things. And then the search begins. Where was I last. Try to remember. Retrace your steps. Look everywhere. That’s a feeling that makes us anxious and uneasy.

In a deeper more profound sense, our lostness from God's presence and closeness to Him makes us terrified. Romans 5:12 tells us of our consequence that was pronounced first to Adam and Eve.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—”

But then comes the Good News in Romans 5. It is who our God is. Who loves us so much that He would offer His Son for our sins.

“15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”

Salvation is free for all, for the many. It is by grace alone, nothing that we could do to change our lost condition that one is called by the Gospel and received as a found sheep, found coin, found son or daughter!

Ezekiel in our Old Testament reading prophesied of the Good Shepherd who would seek and save His lost sheep. They were lost because the false shepherds didn't care about the sheep and only themselves. They didn't feed the sheep with the Good News of God's love for all. But that doesn't change God. He is the seeking and saving God always.

“I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. 15 I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down,” says the Lord God. 16 “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.”

And with this message, God sought out another very lost sheep as we heard in our epistle reading from 1 Timothy 1 – Saul who persecuted the church. The Law convicted Saul and showed him how lost he was. Listen how Paul speaks of it.

“that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and pro-fane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,

What is the sound doctrine? Paul then tells us.

11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.”

For what happened to Saul? He continues in our epistle reading to describe himself – the worst sinner ever.

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.”

Jesus sinner doth receive. And there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents!

And thanks be to God that this pattern shown in Paul, of God searching for the worst of sinners, loving, forgiving, baptizing him, is the pattern for everyone today who is a believer. For the same loving and searching God has found you, washed you of your sins in your baptism and given you everlasting life!

There is much rejoicing in heaven by the angels over you! And as God has received you, you now have the task and joy of sharing this good news to others in your walk of life, like Ezekiel, like Paul, like Charlie, like Martin Luther and so many other Christians who have been saved and now tells of God’s work of salvation in Jesus Christ. And through your works of love and sharing of God’s truth of His Law and Gospel, Jesus sinners does receive and rejoicing continues in heaven over one sinner who repents! Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)