

Daily Reading & Meditation

Your Brother Was Lost and Is Found

SUNDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2022

GOSPEL READING: Luke 15:1-7

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." 3 So he told them this parable: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost 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 his neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' 7 **Just 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.**

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? The housewife who lost a coin faced something of an economic disaster, since the value of the coin would be equivalent to her husband's daily wage. What would she say to her husband when he returned home from work? They were poor and would suffer greatly because of the loss. Her grief and anxiety turn to joy when she finds the coin that she had misplaced.

Contempt and pride lead to division - mercy and forgiveness restores and unites

The parable of the prodigal son also contrasts mercy and forgiveness with their opposites - an unwillingness to forgive and to be reconciled. The father who had been wronged, was forgiving and merciful towards the younger son who recognized his need for forgiveness. But the eldest son, who had not been wronged, was unforgiving and refused to be reconciled with his brother. His refusal to forgive turns into contempt and pride. And his resentment leads to his isolation and estrangement from the community of forgiven sinners.

In this parable Jesus gives us a vivid picture of God the Father and what his character and attitude towards us is like. **God is truly generous, kind, and forgiving towards us. He does not lose hope or give up when we stray from him and his commandments.** He searches our hearts to show us where true love and mercy can be found and he leads us back to the way of everlasting joy and happiness (Psalm 139:1, 23-24). God the Father always rejoices in searching out those who have strayed, and he welcomes them home with open arms. Do you know the joy of your heavenly Father who welcomes you home to his kingdom of everlasting righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit?

Meditation: If you lost something of great value and importance to you wouldn't your search for it until you found it? The joy of finding a lost loved one, a precious member of your fold, and your hard earned savings to feed your hungry family are vivid illustrations which Jesus uses to describe what God's kingdom is like. God the Father does not rejoice in the loss of anyone. He earnestly searches for the lost until they are restored and joyfully united with the whole community of heaven. Jesus told these three parables right after the scribes and Pharisees, the religious elite among the Jews, expressed disapproval with Jesus' close contact with people of bad reputation.

Finding and restoring what has been lost

Why were many tax collectors and sinners drawn to Jesus? Jesus offered them forgiveness, mercy, and healing and the promise of full restoration with God the Father and the whole community of heaven - God's kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy. When the Pharisees began to question Jesus' motive and practice of associating with sinners of ill-repute, Jesus responds by giving them a three-fold lesson in the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost Son. (Luke 15:4-32).

What is the point of Jesus' story about a lost sheep and a lost coin? In Jesus' time shepherds normally counted their sheep at the end of the day to make sure all were accounted for. Since sheep by their very nature are very social, an isolated sheep can quickly become bewildered and even neurotic and become easy prey for wolves and lions. The shepherd's grief and anxiety is turned to joy when he finds the lost sheep and restores it to the fold.

OPENING PRAYER:- Lord Jesus, may your light dispel the darkness of sin, deception, and ignorance, so that all who are lost or confused may find their way to the Father's home and be united with him in a bond of peace and friendship. Transform my heart with your merciful love that I may point many others to the good news of pardon, peace, and new life which you offer to all who trust in you, the Good Shepherd and Saviour of the world. **Amen**

CLOSING PRAYER:- “**World Peace**” Lord, we pray for the victims in Ukraine that they have the strength to forgive the Military forces that are attacking them and the leaders of these forces cease such aggression and repent for their sins. We continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka facing a different enemy.

May we put our trust in the power of good, to overcome evil, and the power of love, to overcome hatred.

We pray for the vision to see and the faith to believe in a world emancipated from violence, where no longer men commit injustice, or bring suffering to others. **Amen.**