

Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost
September 11th, 2022

Introduction to the Day

The grumbling of the religious leaders in today's gospel is actually our holy hope: This Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. That our God seeks and saves the lost is not only a holy hope, it is our only hope. As the writer of 1 Timothy reminds us, "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Thanks be to God.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
whose steadfast love endures forever.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of
one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Merciful God,
**we confess that we have not followed your path
but have chosen our own way.
Instead of putting others before ourselves,
we long to take the best seats at the table.**

**When met by those in need,
we have too often passed by on the other side.
Set us again on the path of life.
Save us from ourselves
and free us to love our neighbors.
Amen.**

Hear the good news!
God does not deal with us according to our sins
but delights in granting pardon and mercy.
In the name of † Jesus Christ, your sins are
forgiven.
You are free to love as God loves.
Amen.

Gathering Hymn "Christ Be Our Light"

#715 vs. 1,3,4,5

Greeting

The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.
And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

O God, overflowing with mercy and compassion, you lead back to yourself all those who go astray. Preserve your people in your loving care, that we may reject whatever is contrary to you and may follow all things that sustain our life in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

²I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, ¹³even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Children's Message

Gospel: Luke 15:1-10

¹Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³So he told them this parable: ⁴“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷Just 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.

⁸“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN

Jesus gives us a glimpse into God’s idea of the Kingdom of Heaven. He gives us an idea of His understanding of what God’s grace and mercy look like lived out. Jesus tells us the way things ought to be with the stories told in this Gospel text.

First, Jesus likens the Kingdom of Heaven, God’s grace and mercy, to a shepherd who has 100 sheep, but one has wandered off. Anyone who was listening that day knows the dangers that the one sheep faces being separated from the flock. And, anyone listening that day knows that if it were their flock of sheep, they too would leave the 99 to go and find the one.

Jesus then likens the Kingdom of Heaven, God’s grace and mercy, to a woman who has 10 silver coins, each one amounting to a day’s wage, and if she loses one, will search every inch of her home until she finds the one. And, they can all relate. They would do the same.

But, these stories that Jesus tells, that are an illustration of what he sees God’s grace and mercy to be, aren’t just that. They aren’t JUST stories of going out and finding the one. The root of these stories, how God understands God’s grace and mercy, is found in how these characters react in these stories.

First, the shepherd, when he finds the sheep, “he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’

The woman, when she finds her one missing coin, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’

In both of these situations, where the one who is lost is sought after and found, there is rejoicing. Not just rejoicing, but communal rejoicing. Parties are thrown when the one who was missing is found. There is excitement and much to be celebrated.

It would do us a lot of good to be reminded WHY Jesus tells these stories. They are feel good stories on their own, but when we get the WHY we realize they are a call to us as the church in the 21st Century.

Our gospel text starts with sinners and tax collectors approaching Jesus. They had no doubt heard what he had to say, what he had been preaching and teaching, and they no doubt believed it to be for them as well, so they were coming to him to listen to what he preached and taught.

And, those who *knew* the way it ought to be (the church folk) didn't like it. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." They were so upset regarding who felt they had a place at Jesus feet that they would grumble in disbelief.

And, Jesus hears them. That is WHY Jesus tells these stories.

Jesus tells these stories of God's amazing grace and mercy in response to those who *knew* the way it ought to be not being happy about who he was giving a place to and who was receiving that embrace.

You see, in their mind and in their way of how the world works, there wasn't a place for repentance and forgiveness. Sinners were sinners and that was that. But, Jesus tells them that there is much rejoicing for the one who repents than the 99 who need no repentance.

Unfortunately, we align more frequently with the ones who question who should and should not belong and be welcomed. We are really good at *saying* that "All are Welcome," or as we say here, "each is known – seen – loved." But, is that our reality as church universal? Do we truly, as the larger church, live out this Gospel text where the ones that we define as "lost" are found AND do we rejoice at their presence? Again, we are good at celebrating those who are lost being here, but do we actually celebrate them? We embrace ourselves for doing such a good job, but do we embrace those longing for the embrace?

People of God, Jesus gives us these stories in the face of a challenge. He gives us these stories as an example of what the Kingdom of God looks like. And he gives us these stories as a challenge to NOT ONLY go out and find the ones who are lost, but to also rejoice when they are found.

What would it look like on Sunday mornings if we rejoiced every time there was a new person in worship, or someone that we hadn't seen in a long time? What would it look like in worship if we truly gave an opening for repentance and the repairing of broken relationships, because if we believe those things are needed or exist among those we worship with, we are kidding ourselves.

These stories that Jesus tells are not just stories of a call to action to go out and find the ones that are lost, but also to remind ourselves that when it feels like we are the ones that are lost, that Jesus seeks us out, knows us, and longs for that embrace. AND, these texts remind us that those who may have been deemed unforgiveable and unwanted, force their way into the story. They know that what they have heard of this man Jesus is for them, and they find and force their way into his story, knowing full well that many will question whether they actually belong.

People of God this is a Gospel text that is a reminder that we are to seek out those who are lost, embrace them, and rejoice at their presence, but also believe that the embrace and the rejoicing is for us as well.

And, Lord knows we need it.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Song of the Day

"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound"

#779 vs. 1,2,3,4

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

As scattered grains of wheat are gathered together into one bread, so let us gather our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of God's good creation.

Your people receive mercy and your grace overflows in our lives. Fill your church with faith and love, and give understanding hearts to those who work to strengthen our ecumenical and interreligious commitments. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Your creation groans as it suffers the impacts of pollution and lack of care. As the seasons change, renew in us the will to protect plants, animals, and habitats. Bless us with bountiful harvests that all may share. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Your world is shattered and the nations rage. Remember us in your mercy. Teach wisdom to our elected leaders so that we know peace in our world, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Your children wander homeless and the hungry cry for bread. Seek out those who are lost or lonely, anxious or depressed, or struggling with addiction or illness. Provide for those in any need (*especially for Gena, Peyton, Matt, David, Cassie, Verna, Irene, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Sherm and Mary, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja*). God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Your work is done in this congregation with our hands, feet, voices, minds, and hearts. Build up the ministries of this community (*local ministries and partnerships may be named*), that we serve our neighbors and welcome the stranger in your name. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Your blessed saints who have died now rest in your presence. Give us thankful hearts for those who have been examples of faith in our lives, and receive us with joy when we come to share eternal life with you. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Gathered together in the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, gracious God, we offer these and all our prayers to you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Gracious God,
in your great love you richly provide for our needs.

Make of these gifts a banquet of blessing,
and make us ready to share with all in need;
through Jesus Christ, who sets a table for all.

Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Communion

Prayer

God of the abundant table,
you have refreshed our hearts in this meal
with bread for the journey.
Give us your grace on the road
that we might serve our neighbors with joy;
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Blessing

God, who gives life to all things
and frees us from despair,
bless you with truth and peace.
And may the holy Trinity, † one God,
guide you always in faith, hope, and love.

Amen.

Sending Song

“Sent Forth By God’s Blessing”

#547

Dismissal

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!

And all of Good Shepherd said,

AMEN!