***Season after Pentecost – September 11, 2016***

***Luke 15:1-10***

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* Today as Jesus responds to those who criticize his welcoming of tax collectors and sinners we learn that***God’s joy is discovered by us as we experience the recovery of something we have lost. And this joy opens us to reaching out to others outside our circle, sharing our joy in celebration with them.***
* Jesus tells a parable with two illustrations in order to take us into the experience of loss. The first is someone losing a sheep (one out of a flock of 100), and that of a woman losing a coin (1 out of ten). In both scenarios, the completeness of a round number (100 & 10) is broken—and it calls out for completeness. Some examples for us of seeking to restore completeness could be—who wants a set of golf clubs with one missing? Who wants a deck with 51 cards? Who would like a piano that has one note that does not play? It’s like losing that one set of car keys. Someone else key will not do. You must find your set of keys. It’s like buying a special present for someone (one of a kind) and you packed it away in your house, and now you cannot remember where it is, so you end up like the woman going over your whole household to find it. *Jesus is really getting at the emotional ordeal of human loss,* where a sheep (like anyone’s pet) sends people out into the streets and alleys searching and calling the police. *The experience of our loss sends us searching to recover what is missing.*
* As Jesus tells this parable about a lost sheep and a lost coin he is actually playing upon the whole issue of *loss* that has come up just previously in Luke’s Gospel when he told a crowd of people of all the things they must give up and *lose,* in order to be his follower. Only now, Jesus is going to have *recovery and finding* in his parable to take us on a path toward the experience of *joy.*
* In Jesus’ parable the man finds his lost sheep; the woman finds her lost coin. But here is where we now learn about the experience of *God’s joy.* In each instance, those who find what was lost must share their joy with others.  **Joy becomes the occasion for us to hold a celebration!** In Jesus’ parable joy over finding what has been lost, cannot simply end at the recovery of something—there must be an invitation to others to celebrate the joy of one’s life being restored!
* In Jesus parable—loss and recovery leads to the celebration of joy with other people—people whom we may otherwise exclude—and it builds community.
* Let us consider a couple of other illustrations of loss and recovery that may help us enter into the experience of God’s joy and the need to celebrate as a community.
* Consider the common experience of a parent shopping in a huge department store and losing track of a young child. The fear and panic. Usually there is scolding once the child is found. But what if there were tears of joy instead? Might there be a deeper lesson for the child?
* Consider the loss from floods and fire this year across the nation. As these victims eventually recover —is there not a cause for their celebration with others?
* Consider the loss of someone to drug addiction or alcoholism and then the experience of their recovery. Is there not an experience of joy and cause for celebration?
* I wonder—how different would it be if people who have finished serving time in prison—ended with a celebration and a vocation to step into. How different would that make our world? Might not the experience of joy be more powerful in one’s outlook on society and life—and certainly one’s faith in God! Actually, I once experienced this as a chaplain at Mendota’s Juvenile Treatment Center—a young man was successfully completing his stay and there was a celebration given for the whole unit in his honor.
* *Today we will have music and time for reflection following my sermon. Here are some questions to help us enter into Jesus’ parable on loss and recovery—to help us enter the experience of joy and celebration with others. For in this journey we indeed are converted by God’s Word to understand why Jesus Christ welcomes sinners and celebrates the recovery of all people in our world.*
* ***God’s joy is discovered by us as we experience the recovery of something we have lost. And this joy opens us to reaching out to others outside our circle, sharing our joy in celebration with them.***
* Recall a time from your own life where something or someone was lost?
* Recall a time from your own life when something or someone you lost was returned to you. Remember that feeling of *joy.*
* If you were to celebrate with others the joy of recovering something or someone in your life, what or who might that be?

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