

Grace: God's undeserved love for each and every one of us. Mercy: God forgiving us our sin for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ. And Peace: peace of heart, peace of mind, peace with God. All of these are yours from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke the fifteenth chapter beginning at the first verse, and we read in Jesus' name:

***Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> So He spoke this parable to them, saying: <sup>4</sup> "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? <sup>5</sup> "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup> "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!' <sup>7</sup> "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. <sup>8</sup> "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> "And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' <sup>10</sup> "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."***

Heavenly Father these are your words. Sanctify us by the truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Being lost does not necessarily imply a physical thing. Being lost does not merely mean that you forgot to bring a map or a compass. Being lost can also be a state of mind. When a loved one passes has not the phrase "I'm lost without them" been uttered before?

When you have a free moment of time can you not be “lost in your thoughts”? And in addition to being more than a mere physical and mental lost... more often than not our “being lost” is spiritual in nature.

Think of the Israelites during their wandering. They knew where they were. They probably even knew the way home, or with some quick help could figure it out. No, the Israelites were more than physically lost, they were spiritually lost. They had walked so far from God, that He allowed them to wander for 40 years before He brought them home. And that can happen to us too, as Jesus tells us in this parable. Some times we can get very “lost” from God... and it is only God that can find us and bring us home. And when God has done this, when He finds us, when He saves us, when He brings us to His home, there is much *rejoicing in heaven*.

Jesus is relaying another one of His parables to those who are listening. This parable wants to teach those who hear the simple fact that there is great rejoicing in heaven. I know that may not seem like the lesson that you have learned

before, but is that not Jesus’ ultimate point? When the parable is over, He makes sure that we know that there is great rejoicing in heaven... over one sinner who repents.

It is sort of interesting how Jesus relates this parable to His hearers, He uses the imagery of a sheep and a coin. Both of these, in our day, seem like rather benign objects. If I were to tell you that a farmer lost a sheep, that may not bother you so much when you think about farmers owning hundreds if not thousands of sheep. In fact, you may write it off to the farmer being careless with his sheep. Or if I told you that a lady lost a coin that may not seem to interest you too much. That’s great, a lady dropped a quarter, big deal. And yet Jesus knew that these were great object lessons to the people of His day, and they are still more than applicable to us today.

Suppose we were to change the first part of the parable slightly. Imagine, instead of being a shepherd and having 100 sheep, that the man was a small business owner and had 100 cars on his lot. Then one of those cars went missing.

Now of course the analogy limps because a car cannot choose to walk away on its own power... but a sheep can. In the instance of a shepherd with sheep, though the shepherd pays close attention to all his sheep, they can still choose to walk away from him. In fact, anyone who has a pet at home can relate. have you ever had a pet run away? You may have been the bet owner possible: feeding it, providing shelter, giving it love, and it still ran away. Maybe it was chasing a squirrel or deer. Maybe it was an open cage that allowed a bird to fly away. Maybe it was just simple curiosity, but something caused that animal to run away... just like the sheep in the parable today.

The sheep decided, regardless of the level of love that was shown this sheep, that it was going to wander away. The sheep left its shepherd to see what the great wide world had to offer... and that is why this parable is so appropriate for us.

In our own lives we wander away from God constantly. He provides for us, He feeds us, He cares for us... and we wander. Maybe it is

because something shiny catches our eye... and we wander. Maybe it is because a baby is making cute faces at us... and we wander. Maybe it is because there is something new and exciting out there... and we wander. We leave God, we abandon Him, because we want to see what the world apart from God has to offer.

And what about that woman with a coin. Well, let's take a closer look at the general principle that Jesus gave us. If we can understand how we are like a sheep, maybe we can also see how we are like a coin. Now, I know that a coin cannot decide to just up and leave on its own, and yet this is the second part of Jesus' parable so it has to apply. So consider, if you will, that the coin is a person, but the woman is a pastor... or a friend... or a family member. The person is in charge of caring for you and making sure that you are all right, and then they lose track of you. They misplace you. Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever been 'misplaced' by a pastor? Though he is trying to keep all the coins together, sometimes he can misplace one. And then he is to spend his time

trying to find this coin... while still maintaining the others.

But when the sheep or the coin are found, there is great rejoicing in heaven. When a sinner, a wanderer is found, the angels of God rejoice that this person has been found and has repented.

Repented of all their sins that they have committed. Repented of the many wrongs that plague their lives. Repented of the many times they have wandered from the shepherd... and even repented of the many times that we have lost our own coins that we are responsible for. We repent, because God would have us repent.

We repent, when we admit that we are not perfect. We repent, when we turn from our sin and turn toward God. When we turn toward the voice that is calling out to us... like a good shepherd does. When we turn to the voice and hear about the forgiveness of our sins through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ. When we hear about the perfect life and innocent death of Jesus for each and every one of us. Jesus lived,

never departing from God and never letting any who were entrusted to Him to stray. Jesus lived, always trusting in His Father for all that He needed in this earthly life, and then he died. He gave up His life for His flock, He gave up His life for His redeemed. And when we trust in this, when we believe all that Jesus has done for us and lean on Him completely.. then we repent of our sins.

And when we repent, as Jesus tells us, there is great joy in heaven. The angels of God are ecstatic when one sinner repents.

But what about those ninety-nine? This is always a rather boggling issue for many who read this text, I mean if every person has sinned how can Jesus say that the angels are happy over the one who repents than over the ninety-nine who do not need to repent.

Whose who do not need to repent... well they are like the older brother in the Prodigal Son parable. It is not that they are perfect, it is not that they get into heaven because of their righteousness, it is not that they have earned

heaven... they are righteous because of the forgiveness offered to them. When you are coming to church regularly, when you are receiving the Lord's Supper regularly, when you are reading and hearing God's Word regularly, you are righteous. And as Christ tells us, not that we look down on righteous people, but rather in heaven there is great joy over one sinner who repents... over one sinner who finally has the righteousness that the ninety-nine already enjoy. And just like in the Prodigal Son parable, there is a great feast when the Prodigal returns, though the older brother never had a party... because the Prodigal was lost and now is found, he was dead and now is alive.

And the same is true for the sheep and the coin, the sinner, in our parable. When a sheep is away from its shepherd, it is as good as dead. When a coin is lost, the value of that coin is no longer possessed by the person who lost it... it too is dead. And yet, when they are found... they are ALIVE! And the sinner who repents, the sinner who acknowledges his sin, is alive! Alive in Jesus Christ. Alive because of the forgiveness that Jesus Christ has won and

offered to each and every person, that we receive only through faith.

While the Prodigal Son is not the text this week, it is the next parable that Jesus tells to illustrate the point He made in the parable we have for today. With the shepherd, the sheep wandered and was lost, was as good as dead. But the shepherd found it and brought it back to life. The coin, also, was lost and was as good as worthless, but it was found and it was brought back to life.

Thank God that He has done all of this for us. When we, like sheep, go astray Jesus our Good Shepherd comes and finds us. And when we, like the woman, lose coins, Jesus our bright and morning star shines and gives us the light that we need in order to find those who are lost. It is not our light, but only Christ's.

Thank God for the great miracles that He has performed for us... and thank God that because of all His work, because of His Son, because of His Means of Grace... there is rejoicing in heaven over each and every one of us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.