

Pentecost 17 – September 11, 2016

Text: Luke 15:1-10

Theme: "Recruiting Sinners. Inquire Within."

**In the Gospel according to Luke, Jesus is talking about lost things; specifically sheep and coins. The point he is making is that if something of value to you is lost, don't you drop everything to look for it? And if you don't look for it, how valuable is it?**

**My mother lost her reading glasses all the time. The search for her \$1.99 readers was almost a weekly occurrence and it always became a family activity since she couldn't cook if she couldn't see and so there was no dinner until the glasses were found. This text from Luke reminds me of my mother's eternal search for her glasses. The woman loses a coin. The man loses a sheep and the world comes to a screeching stop while the search is on. The value of the lost items seems disproportionate to the search. How much is a sheep worth that a man would leave 99 to find one? How much is a single coin worth that a woman would light a lamp and clean the whole house to find it? That is exactly the point Jesus is asking us to consider today.**

**Jesus' audience is comprised of two very different groups of people. There are the tax collectors and sinners who are very interested in what Jesus has to say because they know that they are the lost. Then there are the Pharisees and scribes who do not like what Jesus has to say because they know that they are the losers.If**

**we think of Christ as our evaluator, we will forever be trying to twist his words because we will never get a good evaluation. If we think of Christ as our Savior, he does everything for us and we have nothing but love and gratitude for him.**

**Christ's search for the lost is disproportionate to our worth. That bothers us because we are all tempted to think we are worth more than we are. We all want a good evaluation. Sometimes we even catch ourselves evaluating human beings as though certain ones are more valuable than others. It is easy to live in sin's delusions and when we do, we wander away from God. We get lost. The very one who thinks he is most secure, can become as lost as any.**

**What is the purpose of this church? It is not for us to serve ourselves and have a nice place to meet with our friends once a week. The only purpose of this congregation is to seek the lost. We do not do what we do to make a profit, to get accolades or because it is easy. We do all that we do to have the opportunity to bring Jesus to those lost sheep. We are that woman searching for the lost coin and the Word of God is the lamp that we light to find it. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."**

**It does not make good financial sense to give away money to missionaries, seminaries and child welfare agencies when we are**

**running behind in the budget! It makes no sense to have people staffing the Trinity Center Monday through Friday when only a handful of people show up and some of them are not even contributing members of the congregation! You don't waste resources on something that will provide little or no return. All I can say to the Pharisees and scribes is thank God that Jesus is a rotten businessman. He died on the cross for me. He suffered Hell for me. And if I lived a thousand years I can never thank him enough, much less make it worth his while.**

**The Church is in the business to search for the lost. Who are the lost? Every single person who is distant from Jesus, every weary soul who has lost his way and even every soul who thinks he knows the way, but is on the wrong way. We are constantly trying to recruit new sinners to come and join the fold. Our concern is not if and how they will benefit this congregation. Our concern is not that they are difficult to find or that they are hard to talk to. Our only concern is that Jesus loved them enough to die and be damned for them and they need to know that.**

**Pharisees and scribes do not understand why Jesus wastes his time with sinners and tax collectors. They resent his implication that they should do likewise. They further resent the implication that they have been the ones who lost the sheep that are lost. So the**

**Pharisees and scribes scramble about saying, "We did everything right! It's not our fault that our children don't come to church! It's not our fault that our neighbors are heathens. It's not our fault that we don't give a faithful offering to the Church! It's not our fault!" But that is what Jesus is saying. It is our fault. We are fat, lazy sheep who tread down the pasture, muddy up the water and push the weaker sheep out of the way. It is our fault. Sin is our fault. It certainly is not Jesus' fault. So whose fault is it?**

**When you get to that place, you stop trying to avoid the inevitable conclusion. You are a sinner. But sinners are exactly the ones Jesus receives! Now my conscience is at peace for from the Law I stand acquitted. Christ has purchased my release and my every sin's remitted! There remains nothing for my soul to grieve because Jesus sinners does receive. Now stop making excuses and get out there and seek the lost because that is what we do. We are sinners recruiting sinners for Jesus.**