

### **Text: Luke 15:1-10**

<sup>1</sup>Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear [Jesus].

<sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup>So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup>"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that 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 his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' <sup>7</sup>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.

<sup>8</sup>"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? <sup>9</sup>And when 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.' <sup>10</sup>Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

### **Theme: The Difference Between Heaven and Hell**

There are two words in our text which show the difference between heaven and hell. They are the difference reactions to when sinners repent. In hell there is **grumbling**. In heaven there is **joy**. Jesus would tell three parables in this chapter – the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son to ask which side that we stand on.

#### I. In hell repentance leads to grumbling.

The devil desires that we are all lost. He deceived Adam and Eve into sin, so that they would die and receive God's eternal punishment for their sin. But of course, God promised them a Savior who would redeem them from their sin. Today the devil works as hard as he can to lead us into sin, into despair, and even into self-righteousness. Sometimes we are like the lost sheep or the lost son. The grass seems greener on the other side. We have been taught what is good and right, but there are bad things in this world that look so appealing. They will destroy us, but they appeal to us, and before you know it we realize that we have gotten ourselves into a lot of trouble. Other times we are like the woman who lost a valuable coin. She might have begun to despair whether she would ever find it. There are times when our lives seem hopeless, and often we have ourselves to blame. This could have also been the temptation of the lost sheep until he heard the shepherd's voice, calling him or the lost son until he remembered the goodness and mercy of his father. What these parables deal with the most is self-righteousness. The Pharisees are grumbling that Jesus welcomed sinners. They believed that they were good people who earned God's favor. The older brother in the parable of the Lost Son complained that he slaved for his father and never got anything in return. The devil especially tempts us who are in Christ's church to believe that God must love us because of something good about us. We were valuable to Him. We have no compassion for those whom we believe are standing on the outside. It's tempting to think that they are getting what they deserve. When we have run from our Lord, despair of any hope or put our hope in our works, the devil rejoices.

Those who stand with the devil also desire that many will perish. We might be part of his work to lead other people into temptation. On the one hand, we might actively tempt them to do bad things. We are going the devil's work when we tempt other people to lie, deceive, harm other people, steal or commit adultery. But on the other hand, we are also doing the devil's work when we do not call a sin a sin. If we simply let people continue to run from our Savior with no knowledge that what they are doing is wrong, we are also leading them to their own destruction. It is difficult to preach the Law, but if we do not, people will continue to run from our Savior, not even knowing that what they are doing is wrong. What angers the devil most however, is

when people who are lost, hear the Savior's voice and repent of their sins. The devil and all of hell grumble every time that someone repents. The Pharisees grumbled just like the devil does when people repented and received Jesus' forgiveness. The question in these parables is whether we also grumble. If we do, we are standing on the wrong side, because...

II. In heaven there is joy over every sinner who repents.

This is what Jesus' entire ministry was about. He put it plainly when He said, *"I have come to call sinners to repentance."* He preached, *"Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand."* He was clear and cutting when He showed people their sins, but He especially shared the good news of the forgiveness of sins. Many of the worst of sinners repented. Jesus would celebrate with them. They would invite their friends, who also repented, and a small gathering would become a huge celebration. There was nothing that brought Jesus more joy than when people turned from their sins to the good news that He had forgiven their sins in full.

All of heaven rejoices when we repent. It says three times in the book of Ezekiel, *"Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked...rather than that he should turn from his ways and live."* In today's Epistle lesson Paul writes, *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst."* God does not desire that any of us are lost. It is why the Gospel is preached in the world and why God gives the Gospel the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we will know and believe that Jesus Christ paid for all of our sins on the cross. Think of all of the rejoicing that there must be in heaven. Every single time that someone repents, all the angels of God celebrate! Another person is rescued from hell and given the sure hope of everlasting life with their Savior. The repentance of each person fills heaven with more rejoicing that we could ever imagine.

As Christians on this earth, we also rejoice. We rejoice in our salvation in Christ. We all know that we were like that lost sheep or lost son, who should have known better, but in His mercy Christ searched for us and found us. We remembered His grace and mercy, and our Heavenly Father has welcomed us with open arms. We can all relate to the hymn, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!" Why do we come hear each week? It is to celebrate that Jesus gave His body and shed His blood on that cross for the forgiveness of my sins. There is no greater joy than in knowing that God has received us through Christ our Savior.

We also rejoice in the salvation of each and every Christian. Even as we look around us today there are some people who have hurt or harmed us in the past. There might even be some people that we don't like all that much. Yet, we rejoice that they are here. We rejoice that God forgives them too. We do our best to forgive them as God has forgiven us in Christ. As Christians we are thankful for each and every person whom God has called to faith in Christ. We rejoice with all of heaven in their salvation too.

There is an interesting scene at the end of this chapter. The older brother, who thought that he deserved to be in the banquet, was standing outside grumbling, that his father was celebrating the return of his brother. His self-righteousness put him on the outside looking in. It is the definition of what hell will be like. Jesus pleads for us to be on the inside. He says to us as the father said to this brother, "We had to celebrate and be glad." Rejoice in God's forgiveness for you in Christ and rejoice in the salvation of every repentant sinner that you will also be a part of that celebration of heaven which will have no end. Amen.

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Milwaukee, WI  
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**Prayer of the Church  
 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
 15 September 2019**

We praise Your goodness, O Lord, and celebrate your grace and mercy for sinners like us. Give us hearts that will not grumble when others receive your forgiveness, but that with all of heaven we will rejoice over every sinner who repents. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Make wise and faithful all pastors and all those who hold office in Your Church, O Lord, that by their devotion and service many may hear Your Word and be brought to faith. Raise up many who will heed Your call and serve where You desire. Bless the work of missionaries far and near and those who give aid and comfort to the poor and those in need. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Give to our nation wise and honorable leaders, O Lord, that we may be protected by good laws and delivered from injustice, prejudice and hatred. Bless the members of our armed forces who defend us against our enemies, and guide us that we may be good citizens. Bring harmony and concord to the nations, that war and violence may cease and we may work together for the common good. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bless the homes of Your people, O Lord, that husband and wife may honor their vows of love and fidelity to each other. Unite parents and children in love and affection, that their lives together may be examples to the world of Your goodness and love. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Bring to the sick and sorrowing the comfort of Your grace, that in the days of their afflictions and in their time of adversity they may know Your presence and healing grace [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_]. Be near to those who grieve the loss of loved ones and those to whom death draws near [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_]. According to Your gracious will, grant to all the consolation of Your love and Your tender compassion. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, all things are Yours, and You have promised to well supply us with all that we need. Give us courage and faith, that we may give a confident “amen” to these prayers, certain that You will give us all that is good and beneficial to our salvation and preserve us from all things harmful, for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom, with whom and in whom, be all honor and glory,