

The readings for Sunday, September 15, 2019:

First Reading: Exodus 32:7-14

First Reading (Semi-cont.): Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

Psalm: Psalm 51:1-11 (Psalm 51:1-10 NRSV)

Psalm (Semi-cont.): Psalm 14

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Gospel: Luke 15:1-10

For Sunday's Gospel, we have the parables of lost things: lost sheep (1 of 99) and a lost coin (1 of 10). Let's consider what Christ is trying to teach us about the quality of being lost and the quality of being found.

Some will look at the last sentence and see this Gospel as being about repentance, but when we look at it as part of a series of parables, it's less clear that repentance is the point. After all, the coin doesn't have to do anything to be found; it just sits there. The sheep might repent, but if you've ever tried to wrangle sheep, you know that repentance is not a sheeply quality. And if we kept reading in Luke, we'd get to the parable of that Prodigal Son: is he really sorrowful about his actions? If he hadn't descended to such a state of poverty, would he have had his epiphany?

We could look at these parables as tales of precious resources lost and then found. These two parables revolve around an economic resource: a sheep and a coin. In some ways, the metaphor might be lost on modern readers. I've heard more than one reader talk about how ridiculous it is to get so excited over a lost coin.

But imagine a modern spin: the person who loses 1/3 of a retirement portfolio, but it is restored before the golden years descend. Or perhaps the person who was facing foreclosure, but home values rebound and the mortgage can be refinanced. Rescued from desperate economic circumstances, would we not rejoice?

We know that God rejoices when we return, even as God must know that we will disappoint again. We know that if we're lost, God will look under every shadow for us. We know that God will go to great lengths to find us, even taking on human form and suffering crucifixion.

We worship a God who will not rest until we're all present and accounted for. That's Good News indeed.