

September 11, 2022  
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 15:1-10 (1 Timothy 1:12-17)

REPENTANCE BRINGS JOY TO HEAVEN.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 15th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

Our Gospel text this morning illustrates two separate classes of people: *sinners* and *Pharisees*. The *sinners* know and acknowledge themselves to be sinners, and the *Pharisees* consider themselves holy and righteous. The *sinners* are open and public sinners – such as tax collectors, the sexually immoral, drunkards, gluttons, and gossips. They are despised, considered unclean and are outcasts of the synagogue. They know their guilt. They know they are lost and in need of a Savior.

The *Pharisees*, on the other hand, are pious and proud in their self-righteousness. They delight in their outward adherence to their own interpretation of God’s Law. They considered tax collectors, openly sinful Jews and Gentiles as a lower class of person, like trash that should be thrown away. It offended them that Jesus would not only receive tax collectors and sinners, but He would recline at their tables and eat with them – in a culture that regarded sharing a table with a sinner as a defiling act. Yet, it is from the unwitting lips of the *Pharisees* this morning, that you hear the wonderful Gospel truth.

**“... *This man receives sinners and eats with them.*”** (Luke 15:2)

There’re two types of people in the world: those who believe themselves to be healthy – and the sick. Earlier in His ministry Jesus said:

**“... *Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*”** <sup>32</sup> ***I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*”** (Luke 5:31–32)

The *Pharisees* believed they were religiously healthy and righteous... in no need of a physician... in no need of repentance. So, Jesus tells them the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin. These parables are often used to encourage evangelism. The word evangelism is derived from the Greek word that means: **“to announce good news.”** More specifically it means: **“to proclaim the divine message of the salvation... proclaim the Gospel.”** (BDAG, 402)

Evangelism is the local, one-on-one connecting of individuals with the Gospel of Christ Jesus. You know people who desperately need evangelism, people who need to hear Jesus’ message of

forgiveness and salvation. Everywhere you look there are lost sheep wandering down paths of death and eternal damnation. They are in need of a Savior, the Good Shepherd, to lovingly pick them up and carry them back to the flock. Our families and communities are jam-packed full of open public sinners: the sexually immoral, drunkards, gluttons, gossips, and those with addictions of every stripe who need to be called to repentance. For there is:

***“... more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”*** (Luke 15:6–7)

There are lost coins in our community, modern day Pharisees, who are oblivious to the fact that they are lost. They are unaware of who Jesus is and why they desperately need Him, need to repent and believe the Gospel.

***“... there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*** (Luke 15:10)

There was a time when St Paul was a Pharisee. He was a lost sheep and a lost coin in need of a Savior. He was a blasphemer, persecutor, and an insolent opponent Jesus’ message of forgiveness and salvation. Yet the Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine and went out to rescue Paul. Jesus, who is the Light of the world, shown into the darkness of Paul’s stone-cold dead heart and brought him from death into new life. Paul says:

***“... the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”***  
(1 Timothy 1:14–15)

Notice Paul does not say: “*I was the foremost of sinners.*” No, he says it in the present tense. He says: “*I am the foremost. I still am the chief of sinners.*”

There’s so such a thing as a sheep who needs no repentance. The ninety-nine only think they’re righteous and have no need of repentance. They’re nothing more than lost coins. Scripture teaches us that:

***“None is righteous, no, not one; <sup>11</sup> no one understands; no one seeks for God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”*** (Romans 3:10–12)

That is where evangelism comes in. You, even you, need to continually hear the proclamation of Jesus’ message of forgiveness and salvation, hear the message of Christ crucified for sinners of whom you and I are foremost. Because it is through that proclamation that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains your faith.

Maybe your sins are not on display for your friends and neighbors and the public to see, but your sins are just as deadly. Perhaps you are a Pharisee who, like the lost coin, does not even know that you are lost. But you are, because according to Jesus in our text, if you are not the lost sheep or the lost coin, then you are not one over whom Christ, His Father, and all the angels in heaven rejoice. (cf: Luke 15:7, 10) If you are not truly a sinner, then you do not need repentance. If you are not truly dead in your trespasses, you do not need a Savior to bring you from death to new life in Christ.

Your sin is deadly. It is your worst nightmare. Sure, you are not a suicidal terrorist, a genocidal dictator, or one of those telephone con-artists scamming senior citizens out of their Social Security check. Of course, those people are all sinners – but they are not **your** problem. To be sure, they need to hear your confession of the hope you have in your Savior. But first and foremost, you and your sin are **your** problem. And Jesus came to save **you** from **your** problem, **your** sin. Jesus receives sinners and eats with them.

By welcoming you and eating with you – does that mean that Jesus condones or tolerates your sin? That is what the Pharisees thought and that is why they grumbled. Their forefathers witnessed God’s power and might, yet they grumbled and were sentenced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until they died. (cf: Numbers 14:20–33) St Paul writes:

***"! What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? "***

***By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?"*** (Romans 6:1–2)

Jesus calls all sinners to repentance and turn away from their sin. He proclaimed:

***"... repent and believe in the gospel."*** (Mark 1:15)

The lost coin is a perfect example of a sinner who has become a slave to their corrupt habits and have been separated from God. The longer a shiny coin is lost, the less chance there is to finding it. Its sparkle gets dulled by dirt and grime and eventually is buried out of sight.

So, too, when the sinner slips deeper into the filth of his sin, he becomes a slave to his sinful habits until the mud and muck of his transgression blinds him to faith in Jesus. Eventually God will give that person over to their depraved mind. (cf: Romans 1:28-31) Just as the coin cannot seek out and find its owner, neither can you seek out nor find your Savior. Yet Jesus seeks you in the preaching of His Word and feeds you in His Sacraments. He receives sinners and eats with them.

Sheep need someone or something to lead them in the direction they should go. They find safety within the flock and if they wonder away or become separated, they become vulnerable to attack from wolves. And once a lost sheep recognizes it is lost and alone, it will eventually become despondent, lie down helplessly, and refuse to budge.

When the lost sheep is hunkered down in the wilderness, it cannot return to the flock or come to shepherd on his own. It is the shepherd who leaves the flock behind to search high and low until the lost is found. Once found, shepherd has to pick it up and carry it to safety. Back in the flock, the sheep is no longer afraid and is no longer at risk.

As sheep, you cannot come to the Shepherd on your own. As a lost and condemned sinner, you can neither comfort yourself, nor escape the devil, death, and eternal damnation. You did not chose Jesus. He chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruits of repentance. (cf: John 15:16) It is Jesus Christ, your Savior, who draws you to Himself. Even once in faith, you are still unable to stay in the true faith by your own means. The Good Shepherd must do it all – and He does.

Dear Christian, examine yourself and repent. Repent and let the angels rejoice, for there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. How do you examine yourself? Go to your Small Catechism or turn to page 326 in your hymnal and follow Luther's method.

***“Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are a father, mother, son, daughter, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot tempered, rude or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?”*** (SC V)

Repent of all your sins, what you have done and left undone. Even repent of those sins you are not aware of, as you do in the Lord's Prayer. Repent and receive our Lord's Absolution as the angels rejoice in heaven.

***As a called and ordained servant of the Word, in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ~~the~~ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.***

Our Lord does all the work through His means. Apart from Christ and His means of salvation, you are among the lost. Jesus is only for sinners. The healthy have no need of a physician and the righteous have no need to repent.

The fact remains, you and I are the foremost of all sinners. But greater yet, Jesus became the worst, becoming sin for you, so that you might become the righteousness of God. (cf: 2 Corinthians 5:21) As you just confessed in our sermon hymn:

***Oh, how blest it is to know:  
Were as scarlet my transgression,  
It shall be as white as snow  
By Thy blood and bitter passion;  
For these words I now believe:  
Jesus sinners doth receive.*** (LSB #609, stz. 5)

Jesus receives sinners and eats with them. He has prepared His Table for you for you to partake of His very body and blood, given and shed for you. Take eat. Take drink. For the forgiveness of your sin and to strengthen you in body and soul unto life everlasting.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.