

The Lost & The Found

September 11, 2016 – Luke 15:1-7

“Now the Tax Collectors and Sinners were all gathering around to hear Him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them. Then Jesus told them this parable: Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does He not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until He finds it? And when he finds it, He joyfully puts it on His shoulders and goes home. Then He calls His friends and neighbors together and says, Rejoice with Me; I have found My lost sheep. I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over the ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

When you were in grade school and in high school, were there any other students who picked on you and called you names? Or were you one of those students in grade school and high school who picked on others and called them by names that were intended to be cruel and mean?

This morning in our text we hear some names and labels that are given to people of different groups:

- Tax Collector - Sinner – Pharisee – Teacher of the Law.

Would you be willing to be called by any of those names?

The **Tax Collectors** were the Jewish IRS agents working for the Roman government. Matthew, one of the writers of the 4 Gospels, was a tax collector. He was also sometimes called Levi.

The **Sinners** would include the thieves (tax collectors) and the prostitutes.

The Pharisees: A religious Jewish group that believed they did all the right things to be acceptable before God.

The **Teachers of the Law:** Scribes, religious leaders who did the writing and could also be called the Scribes.

Which group would you want to be included in? By what name would you want to be labeled of the four listed in our sermon text? Would you be willing to stand up and say to the world. - I am a sinner who has stolen and committed adultery. Or would you say, “Hey everyone I am a Pharisee and a Scribe”

The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were watching Jesus and trying to find something wrong with what Jesus did and said. When they saw Jesus with the tax collectors and sinners, they muttered and complained against Jesus. The usage of the Greek word is a continual muttering.

As one looks closely at this text, we might even state that the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were trying to bully Jesus around.

But how does Jesus deal with the situation? Because He is True God as well as True Man, Jesus knows what the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law are doing and he tells a parable.

He speaks of 100 sheep and one goes astray.

And The Shepherd goes after the one lost sheep.

It is not as if the Shepherd needed that one lost sheep. The Shepherd was wealthy enough, yet the owner of the sheep goes after even the one.

God comes and finds each individual. God found each one of us through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. God cares about the welfare of each individual.

God cared about you so much that He sent His One and Only Son Jesus to die for your sin and then the Lord God found you with the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Because God has brought you to faith in Jesus, you can now look forward to heaven while you live your life on this earth for Jesus.

The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law actually separated themselves from Jesus and His saving power. They thought they were the IN group, but in reality they were outside of salvation because of their own pride.

The Sinners and Tax Collectors on the other hand, they thought they were the OUT CASTS of society.

Yet in reality they came to Jesus with humble hearts, seeking His forgiveness.

What is the result of those who are brought to faith in Christ Jesus?

There is rejoicing in heaven!

In the Parable of the Lost Coin, We are told, "There is rejoicing in the presence of the ANGELS of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 16:10)

Have you ever thought to yourself, "That person over there does not deserve to be saved from Hell, they deserve hell and everything bad that happens to them."

Then you have fallen into the sin of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law, who thought that they did not need a Savior.

While the Sinners and Tax Collectors smite their breast and humbly say, "Lord Have mercy on me a Sinner."

It is to a humble heart that the Lord Jesus says to you as He said to the paralytic who was lowered down through the roof, "Friend, Your sins are forgiven." (Lk. 5:20) AMEN