



# Christian Education

A series of Sermons and Occasional Papers  
From the clergy and members  
of Holy Trinity Church  
Forbes Park, Makati

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## Readings for this Sunday:

Old Testament Exodus 32:1,7-14  
Epistle 1 Timothy 1:12-17  
Gospel Luke 15:1-10

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### PRAYER:

*Almighty God, pour into our hearts the spirit of truth and the grace to share your message of forgiveness, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we maybe able to receive and share your Word through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.*

Some Biblical scholars describe, Luke Chapter 15 as "the gospel in the gospel" because it portrays a clear essence of the good news which Jesus has to proclaim. Luke explains how Jesus associates with sinners especially when He used the terms lost and found (vv.6, 9,) and rejoice and celebrate (vv.6, 9). To the scribes and Pharisees, the association of Jesus with sinners is a disgrace and a big offence. It contradicts their teaching about the Law; that is to refrain from people who are labeled as sinners because they are the "people of the land". Obviously, they would be shocked when they saw Jesus in the company of people who were not only ranked as outsiders and people of the land but sinners.

So Jesus told them the parable of the lost sheep and the shepherd's joy when the sheep was found. Anyone who has lost something feels that something is lacking. There is a tension within that urges him/her to search for the one thing that was lost. When it is found, there is a feeling of great relief.

The most typical yet effective method in Jesus parables is the use of the shepherd figure familiar to the Judean situation. He described the shepherd having a hard and dangerous task. The pasture was scarce and they have to transfer from one plateau to another in search for greener pasture. There was no restraining barrier or walls to protect the sheep and most often, the sheep goes astray. The shepherd was personally responsible for the sheep. They must bring the sheep home and if it died they must bring the fleece back for evidence. When the flock is brought home safely, the whole family or community rejoices and celebrate with thanksgiving.

This is the picture Jesus drew of God. It is a picture of a God who will never abandon His people and rejoices when a lost sinner is found. In the same way, Jesus says, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. When a sinner turns to God, heaven throws a party. The prospect of such joy keeps Jesus associating with sinners. Man goes astray because of his own foolishness, like the sheep who wandered apart from the others; but God never give up hope of finding the lost. In Isaiah 49: 15, the people of Jerusalem complained that God has deserted them but God said "can a mother forget her baby and not love the child she bore? Even if a mother forgets her child, I will never forget you".

Same is true to the message of the parable of the lost coin. It was accidentally lost and the search begins with certainty that "it must be in here somewhere." The woman lighted a lamp and swept the floor and when she found it, there was a great relief. Why is the woman so eager to find the coin? It might be due to sheer necessity and if she does not find it, the family might not eat. But the most important is when she found the coin she called her friends and rejoice for the recovery of the coin.

As I said earlier, no Pharisee had ever dreamed of a God like the God pictured by Jesus in the two parables. The Jew might have agreed that if a man came crawling home to God in self-abasement and prayed for pity he might find it; but he would never conceived of a God who went out to search for sinners. We believe in the seeking love of God because we see that love incarnate in Jesus Christ, who came to seek and to save that which is lost.

What have we learned? We learned that God's has a priority to save sinners. This priority is the joy of Jesus when He associated with sinners even if it becomes a cultural reverse or unacceptable to the Jews. Second, we learned that the scribes and Pharisees or the leaders of the time were not so much interested in the issue of salvation but to the destruction of sinners. As St. Paul said in his letter to Timothy (1Tim. 1: 15-16) "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - of whom I am the worst. But for the very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life"

In a sense we are all lost or become prodigal sons because we lose track by the many detours of life. We might be lost by our sheer foolishness like the sheep who wandered away from the flock or we might be lost accidentally like a coin that accidentally dropped in the dark due to our daily necessity; but God is always here with us. He is here so that we can always be found. As Christians let us follow this good example, to go forth and bring back the lost "sheep" and the missing "coin" into the fold when they are found there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

*MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATION OF MY  
HEART BE ACCEPTABLE TO YOU O LORD MY REDEEMER AND  
KING. AMEN*

