

III TRINITY 2016

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

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Welcome to God's Lost and Found Department...something precious and valuable gets lost...something precious and valuable gets found...it's time to rejoice and celebrate!

Jesus had a reputation of attracting tax collectors and other questionable characters. They like hearing about God's love and compassion and mercy. They were the type of people respectable religious types avoided.

The parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin are two stories that teach us the same lesson...the unrestricted and unsparing love of God in seeking out those who have lost their way...no matter how insignificant they might be...and His joy in finding and rescuing them from evil.

In the parable of the Lost Sheep...a farmer loses one of his sheep. His life's work was all about his sheep...all of them. He leaves the other 99 sheep safe and secure and goes out to find the lost sheep. When he finds the lost sheep he places it on his shoulders and brings it back to the safety and security of the sheep pen. One of the most compelling icons is that of Jesus the Good Shepherd carrying the sheep on his shoulders. It's time to rejoice and celebrate.

In the parable of the Lost Coin...a woman loses one of 10 silver coins. The silver coins were likely her life savings or maybe an inheritance. The silver coin was a day's wages for a skilled worker. If we consider anyone in the Bay Area would have to earn about \$400 per day just to make ends meet...we can begin to understand why the woman was so desperate to find her lost coin...and when she does...it's time to rejoice and celebrate.

The two parables are about God's love, compassion and infinite power to forgive and welcome home anyone, no matter how degraded and excluded from respectable society they might be or might consider themselves. God begins the process of restoration and forgiveness...he actively seeks those who are lost and is happy when they are found and rescued from evil.

For the tax collectors and other outcasts of society this was new and refreshing news...Good News...that they were not beyond God's love and reach and forgiveness...no matter how marginalized their lives were.

The religious leaders of the time found Jesus' teaching radical and disturbing. They believed God welcomed repentant sinners...they had a hard time with the idea God actively searched for those who were not repentant. There is a third story about a boy who gets lost and is found...the parable of the Lost Son...that teaches us this lesson...no one is beyond God's reach.

If we find ourselves in the Lost and Found Department we must realize there is always a way out...through Jesus himself. None of us can ever get so lost in the messes we create in our lives that God cannot find us...and he will find us...unless we choose to stay lost. And when God does find us and we are restored to wholeness...it's time to rejoice and celebrate now...and the Angels and Saints rejoice and celebrate with us in heaven.

Our friend Saint Peter tells us we should all be subject to each other and wear humility like a coat. We must love each other and do what's best for each other...and act with humility...God does not like arrogant and self-righteous behavior. Peter tells us when we show humility...God "will lift us up in his own good time...and to leave all our worries with him...because he cares for us."

God loves all of humanity. He loves...you and me...sinner and saint...tax collector and priest...politician and teacher. None of us are ever beyond God's love and reach...even if we think we have messed our lives up so badly even he can't help us. And we cannot exclude people we don't like...or we think are beneath us. God can help them too.

Restoration to completeness and wholeness is possible...with God's help. It's time to rejoice and celebrate!

