

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
September 29, 2013**

***“Christ’s Love, Our Calling”  
Year 4: Love Speaks***

**Luke 15: 1-10**

**Love Speaks Passionately**

- 1. A man with a lost sheep**
- 2. A woman with a lost coin**

Hymns: 233 – 544

Distribution: 385 – 309

Closing: 250

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

***Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”***

***<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> “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? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ <sup>7</sup> I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.***

***<sup>8</sup> “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ <sup>10</sup> In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”***

Luke 15:1-10

You were supposed to be out the door 10 minutes ago, but instead you are still inside, going from room to room, pulling out drawers and searching in old pants pockets. The item you are looking for isn’t even all that important, but the fact that you can’t find it is driving you crazy, and now it is your mission to search until you do find it. The kids in the car can wait, the appointment can wait; at the moment, this search for what you lost has you. And finally, after 10 more minutes of searching something hits you. You run upstairs and look in the unlikeliest of places and there it is! What do you do, you celebrate because you found what was lost.

If you can relate to that scene, you will understand the basic premise of the two parables that serve as the focal point of the Gospel for today.

First, Jesus tells us about a man with a lost sheep. The first thing that Jesus tells us about this man is that he has 100 sheep to his name. That is important, because what it means is that this ONE lost sheep isn’t really that big of a deal if we are talking about monetary value. It wouldn’t destroy this man financially if he lost that one sheep. In fact, it wouldn’t make much sense at all for the man to go after that sheep for the sake of the other 99.

Yet despite that, Jesus says that this man does go after that sheep. He pursues it. He tracks it. He searches high and low, over mountains and through rivers and down into canyons. Though it doesn’t make much sense, this man is passionate in his search for this one lost sheep.

Because of the passion that consumed this man, when he finally finds that one lost sheep, he is filled with absolute joy. He calls his neighbors and he exclaims, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep!”

Though the point of that story is very clear, Jesus tells another story, almost exactly the same. There is a woman with a lost coin. Once again, the first thing that Jesus tells us about this woman is that she has 10 silver coins. These coins are drachmas to be more exact, and each one is worth about a day’s worth of work, this is

a good sum of money to be just carrying around. The woman loses just ONE of these coins. Again, losing one when you still have 9 would not be the end of the world, but what happens once again? This woman goes on the search; lighting lamps, sweeping in the darkest, dirtiest corners, being consumed by her desire to find this one lost coin. And when she finds it? She calls her neighbors and exclaims, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin!"

The premise is simple, isn't it? First off, people despise losing things. Big, small; valuable, invaluable; it drives us crazy! But secondly, people love finding things. Again, big, small; valuable, invaluable; when we find something that we thought was lost, it spontaneously fills us with joy. Frustration in losing, satisfaction in finding; it is something that we all know from our own lives, right?

So, why would Jesus tell not just one, but two similar stories to nail home this basic premise that we already know? Look at verses 1 and 2: ***"Now the tax collectors and 'sinners' were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'***

Those verses tell us that Jesus was finding what was once lost. However, it wasn't some possession that wasn't all that important like extra coins or sheep. Rather, he was finding lost souls; finding them among the scum of society, rescuing them from an eternity in the depths of hell. Jesus wanted to rejoice, but the Jewish leaders would not join with him in that rejoicing.

What was happening is that the basic premise that we were talking about before was being defied by the Jewish leaders. Normally, people hate it when something is lost and they rejoice when it is found, no matter what it might be. But when people who were lost in their sin and destined for hell were being found by the sweet good news of forgiveness through Jesus, these Jewish leaders were upset.

It didn't make any sense. It was inexplicable to Jesus, unfathomable that these Jewish leaders, who would rejoice with their neighbor

if they found a lost sheep or coin, would not rejoice with Jesus when he was finding lost people. It wasn't just inexplicable; it was disgraceful; it was sinful.

What was missing, that kept them from joy. It was love; there was no love in their hearts; there was no love for the lost. Jesus told not just one, but two stories to show how ridiculous and wrong it was. If you are going to be a friend of Jesus, you need to have a passionate love for the lost.

That statement is striking. It's striking because you know what they say about Lutherans, don't you?

- Commended for being very diligent in following Christ's command to protect his Word as truth.
- Very passionate about Christian education and raising our children up in the way of the Lord.
- Unbelievably devoted to holding onto our Lutheran heritage.
- But sometimes lacking in love for the Lost.

That is an interesting observation, isn't it? A scary observation, in light of Jesus' two parables, and who he spoke them to? It certainly raises some questions:

- Do we chase after the Lost with the dedication and passion?
- Do we go after them with the same reckless abandon as the shepherd that Jesus told us about?
- Do we search with the same tedious focus as the woman looking for her coin?
- Or do we walk past the lost without a second thought?
- Do we dismiss the search as too difficult and not worth the effort or the cost?
- Do we setup and run our church focused on the already found more than the lost?

Those are all questions, not necessarily convictions, but they certainly better be questions we think about here at Holy Trinity, and also individually. Does a love for the Lost consume us?

Here is why it matters:

Obviously, our love for the Lost has an impact on others. It has an impact on those who don't know Jesus. Just as a coin that is lost will never be found unless it is being looked for, a soul that is lost will never be found unless that person hears the beautiful message of the Word of God. The more we love the Lost, the deeper our passion for them; the further we will go in our search, the more passionate we will be in our pursuit, the less likely we will be to give up. More will be found and they will experience the joy of knowing Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin and guilt and hell. That is the obvious impact that results from how much we love the lost.

But it also affects you. In many ways, your level of love for the Lost and your desire to find them affects the amount of joy that you experience as a Christian. Consider again those two characters from the parable. That man had 100 sheep, that woman had 10 valuable coins, those were certainly things to be happy about, things that brought security, but we don't hear about any celebration of joy because of what they already had. Instead, it was when they found something that was lost, even if it was only a small part of what they had, that brought them this great joy that burst out to those around them.

Have you ever thought about that as your Christian joy flat lines and you struggle through the monotony of another Sunday morning in church and another week in between just like all the others? When Jesus says to go out and share his Word, it is not just a command ordered for his benefit. **It is an opportunity given out for your benefit.** Jesus is inviting you to join him in that search for the lost, that you might experience that satisfying joy that comes when what has been lost is found. For the Christian, finding the lost will bring a different kind of joy into your lives, joy that will come out in celebration. Just think about when we have an adult confirmation. That is a joyous celebration. I hope that every one of you feels an excitement when you see a person standing up here who has been found. We are happy as a group. But it is a different kind of joy that goes

through you if you know that person, if you played a supporting role in finding them.

Going after the lost is essential to your ongoing Christian joy, because ultimately, every time you witness the lost being found, it will give you a reminder. You once were lost. Jesus loved you who were lost, and he came after you. He came down from his place in heaven just to find you. He went up on that cross just to find you. He sent his Holy Spirit out just to find you. And when you were found, Jesus and the angels of heaven rejoiced.

Now that you have been found, Jesus wants you to experience that joy that comes in finding the lost. But it can only happen if you share in his passion for the lost. So, go out into the world, and search. Let that search consume your life, go after the lost with a passion that cannot be deterred; and God will give you opportunities to rejoice.