

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

After the fall, the first man and woman hid. They hid from God. They were afraid. They knew they had sinned. So too when Israel drew nigh unto the Mountain of the Lord at Sinai, the Israelites were afraid even to approach the mountain. They knew that they were unclean. They knew that coming into the presence of God means death for a sinner.

So they pleaded with Moses “You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Consider also Uzza, who steadied the Ark of the Covenant when it was jostled by the oxen. He was stricken dead for touching the Ark. Sin cannot stand in the presence of a Holy God. Sinners hide from God.

But the account St. Luke records of our Lord begins with “At that time, all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Jesus...” Tax collectors and sinners. Fallen, fallible, broken men, men like you and me. Such men drawing nigh unto God, the same God that dwelt between the cherubim over the Mercy Seat. So if sinners can draw nigh unto God, something must have changed. Man hasn’t changed. He is still sinful, still unworthy, still stained and blemished and imperfect. And man can never change that. You can never change that.

So if tax collectors and sinners drew near to the Lord, and man hasn’t changed, then God, who is immutable, who cannot change, has changed. He became Man. He was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary. He took on flesh, human flesh, Mary’s flesh. Man could not approach God. So God came to men. If you can hear it, He left the 99 to search for the one.

The Parables that Christ speaks aren’t about sinful men seeking God. Sinners don’t seek God. They can’t. They are hardwired against it. The Parables the Lord speaks, the Parable of the Lost Sheep, and the Parable of the lost coin, are spoken to reveal Divine Truth. They are spoken to teach you about God. God is a God of love. He seeks the wayward and the lost. As He sits in the presence of tax collectors and sinners, He is the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep.

Men don’t leave 99 to seek one. They let the one perish and they remain with the 99. “A bird in the hand”, the saying goes. A worldly shepherd would stay with the 99 and write the lost one off, a cost of doing business. Men are self-serving and egocentric. They do what pleases them, what enriches them, even when others are harmed by it. But God, although He became Man, is not like fallen men. Every soul is precious to Him. Your soul is precious to Him. Your Shepherd, from whom you strayed in your sin, seeks and finds you.

He steps into the fleshly fray. He is the Holy One of Israel in your midst. He suffered and died to redeem you. The Shepherd bore you as He shouldered the Gibbet of the cross, where He would pay for your sins. He bore you as He covered Himself in your sin, and was bound to that cruciform altar, where the Shepherd became the Lamb. He did what the Prophet calls “excellent things”. He did them for your redemption.

And so it is with the parable of the woman and the lost coin. The Church, the Bride of Christ, is the woman. Her Groom is Christ. Her Light is the Gospel, which enlightens the world. She takes the Holy Gospel to the darkest corners of the earth, her preachers proclaiming Christ and

Him crucified for the remission of sins, and risen for the justification of sinful men. She carefully sweeps until she finds the lost. And she calls her friends together, the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, and says "Rejoice with me!" You are the coin She found. You are marked with God's inscription and God's image.

Truth be told, lost sheep wander off by themselves. It seems good to them at the time. So it is with sin. So it is with you. The sin in which you were born is sufficient to condemn you. But sinners sin. Your sins of commission and omission are your wandering away from God, the things you have done that God forbids, and the things God requires that you've failed to do.

The roaring lion seeks to devour you. He doesn't lead sheep away from the flock for their own good. He leads sheep away from the flock so that he can devour them. He tempts those who bear God's image and inscription to fall into the dark corners of sin and despair, far away from the Holy Church.

So the Chief of the Apostles bids you resist the roaring lion. And that you can only do by faith, the faith created by the Light of the Gospel and the working of the Holy Spirit. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Cast all your cares upon Him, upon the One who bore your sins, for He cares for you.

"With joy", the Prophet writes, "you will draw water from the wells of salvation." What Christ did for you He brings to you in Holy Baptism. There He washes His forgiveness into you. There He washes His righteousness into you. There He places His Name on you. And so you do as the Prophet says. You receive the Living Water. You receive it in joy. And in baptismal faith, you "call upon His name", the Name of the Triune God.

The Lord has become your salvation. He is your strength. So you may proclaim with Isaiah "O LORD, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid." That is what the Prophet means when he writes that God has become your song. You believe with your heart, and you confess with your mouth, and there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over you.

The Holy One of Israel is still in your midst. God is still your salvation. And He is still God and Man, exalted, reigning now from His celestial throne. He is your Lord. So in faith, you need not be afraid. In Christ, it is you who have changed. You have been declared righteous before God. So you can draw nigh unto God.

You come to Him as His redeemed, covered in the Blood of Christ. You come to Him declared to be holy and pure. You come in faith. This day He bids you to come, to kneel and eat the Body and drink the Blood of the Holy One of Israel, the Shepherd, the Holy Lamb. He is in your midst this day. He is placed into you, and poured from the Chalice across your lips and into your soul. His anger is turned away, and by His Holy Sacrament He comforts you.

Feeding you His Body, giving you to drink of His Blood, He who called you to His eternal glory by Christ ♦Jesus, perfects, establishes, strengthens, and settles you. You believe, eat and drink, and there is joy in heaven over you.

St. Luke 15:1-10

The Third Sunday after Trinity / Fourth Sunday after Pentecost 2020 A. ✠ D.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.