

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, September 11-17 (C) - Luke 15:1-10

Discipleship: *A New Joy*

Focus Question: *What does joy feel like?*

word of life

“Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10 (NRSV)

Read Luke 15:1-10

Once more Jesus is accompanied by the Pharisees and scribes who are complaining about the company Jesus keeps. They grumble, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:2 NRSV)

1. *What might be wrong with interacting with sinners?*
2. *Who is not a sinner?*

Jesus responds by telling three parables describing the joy experienced when the lost is found. The parables include a shepherd who loses a sheep, a woman who loses a coin, and a father who loses his son. All are contained in Luke 15 and the first two parables are included as part of this lesson.

3. *What does it feel like to lose something?*
4. *What do you do when you realize something is missing?*
5. *How quickly do you give up on the lost item?*

The first parable describes a shepherd with one hundred sheep, but loses one. He leaves the ninety-nine to seek the lost. On some level this parable is not reasonable. Why abandon and risk the ninety-nine in order to help one? Perhaps the shepherd brought the sheep to a protected place before departing. Or perhaps the shepherd risks everything out of his love for the one. Either way, the lost sheep matters.

Yet, the parable is not about proper shepherding techniques as much as the joy of finding the lost. In fact, the joy is so abundant, the shepherd goes home and throws a party to rejoice at the lost being found.

6. *Imagine hearing this parable if you were lost. What might you feel?*
7. *Imagine hearing this parable if you were one of the ninety-nine. What might you feel?*

The second parable is of a woman who has ten silver coins but loses one of them. It is estimated her money is worth months of savings. She fervently searches her home until she finds it. Like the shepherd, she invites her friends to celebrate. Her joy is contagious and spreads to others.

8. *With whom do you relate: the shepherd or the woman? How so?*
9. *After searching so long for her lost coin, why spend the money on a party?*
10. *Why not forget the party and save the money?*

God’s joy when the lost is found and sinners repent is the heart of the gospel message. God does not condemn but rejoices with an overflowing party. There is hope for all of us, sinners that we are. Through the Holy Spirit, God is at work seeking us and drawing us to Jesus Christ.

11. *What is the message of this passage for you?*
12. *How do you share in God’s joy?*

word among us

A struggling congregation considered closing its doors because worship attendance had dipped so low, but their newly called pastor had much enthusiasm. Slowly over a period of months, people who had not worshipped in years began to come back to church. One woman who always sat in the front was tempted to sit in the back saying, “If I’m in the front, then I can’t welcome those who finally come back to church. This is so exciting!” There was such joy each Sunday.

But not all had joy. Some of the congregation who had endured the pain of the bad years resented people coming back to enjoy the good years. One man asked, “Where were these members when we needed them? Why didn’t they call me back when I tried to get them involved?”

1. *Have you ever found yourself in a situation wanting to rejoice at the lost being found, but meeting resentment?*
2. *What prevents some from rejoicing when the lost has been found?*

The parables told by Jesus are familiar, but are not as simple as they appear. Sometimes it is easier to get caught up in grumbling about those newcomers and the changes needed to accommodate the lost. Take a moment to prayerfully ponder where you find yourselves in the lesson.

3. *Do you relate to those who complain about Jesus eating with sinners, those who are lost needing to be found, or those filled with joy at finding the lost? Explain.*
4. *Would you have answered the last question differently at various points of your life? Explain.*

Ultimately this passage is not about resentment and grumbling. It is not even about the lost, but about a God who seeks the lost and rejoices when sinners repent. The word “repent” means to turn and face a new direction. No longer lost, the person now faces God. Instead of anger and wrath, the lost person discovers a God who welcomes the lost home and throws a party. No doubt, the lost person rejoices, but this joy pales in comparison to the joy of God who finds the lost.

5. *Attempt to describe God’s joy when we as sinners repent.*
6. *Attempt to describe your joy at being found, forgiven, and accepted by God.*

At worship, we are invited to participate in the celebration of the feast of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Sinners are welcomed to the feast. Forgiveness is extended. Let the party begin with God as the host, rejoicing with gusto.

7. *How does your congregation welcome sinners?*
8. *How does your congregation rejoice?*
9. *What might be done in your congregation to more fully reflect the presence of God and God’s joy?*

Prayer

God of grace, thank you for seeking and finding us. Thank you for rejoicing instead of condemning. Release joy in our hearts and lives. Amen.

Dig Deeper

Psalm 51:1-17

last word

Take a deep breath.
Allow God to fill your whole being.



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