

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Aitkin, Minnesota**  
**September 11, 2022**  
**The Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost**  
**ONLINE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

- P In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C **Amen.**
- P Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
- P Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
C **who made heaven and earth.**
- P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,  
C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**
- P O almighty God, merciful Father,  
C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**
- P Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C **Amen.**

## Introit

You have turned for me my mourning into | dancing;\*

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you for- | ever!

O LORD my God, I cried to | you for help,\*

and you have | healed me.

O LORD, you have brought up my soul | from Sheol;\*

you restored me to life from among those who go down | to the pit.

Sing praises to the LORD, O | you his saints,\*

and give thanks to his | holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a | lifetime.\*

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the | morning.

**Glory be to the Father and | to the Son\***

**and to the Holy | Spirit;**

**as it was in the be- | ginning,\***

**is now, and will be forever. | Amen.**

You have turned for me my mourning into | dancing;\*

O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you for- | ever!

## Collect of the Day

P Let us pray. Lord Jesus, You are the Good Shepherd, without whom nothing is secure. Rescue and preserve us that we may not be lost forever but follow You, rejoicing in the way that leads to eternal life; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

## Old Testament Reading

*Ezekiel 34:11–24*

“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a

day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

“As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and male goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture; and to drink of clear water, that you must muddy the rest of the water with your feet? And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

“Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: Behold, I, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you push with side and shoulder, and thrust at all the weak with your horns, till you have scattered them abroad, I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Epistle**

*1 Timothy 1:5–17*

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

## **Holy Gospel**

*Luke 15:1–10*

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear [Jesus]. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

So he told them this parable: “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise be to Thee, O Christ.**

## **Apostles’ Creed**

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,**

was crucified, died and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father

Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living

and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy Christian Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

### Sermon Text – Luke 15:1-10

#### Sermon Theme – “Our Searching and Rejoicing Lord”

As we heard in our text, the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling that Jesus **“receives sinners and eats with them”** (Luke 15:2). The thing is Jesus not only **“receives sinners and eats with them,”** He goes out looking for them! He searches until He finds them, and when He finds them, He rejoices because He has found them. And He doesn’t just rejoice privately, or in some small way, but calls together everyone he can think of and holds a party. Perhaps like the party He was at when the Pharisees and scribes were grumbling against Him.

So to help them - and us - understand His joy, Jesus tells two stories about finding, a story about finding a lost sheep and a story about finding a lost coin. Notice how He begins each of these stories by saying **“What man”** or **“What woman”** doesn’t do what He is describing in the story? That’s what He asks.

What He describes is what we do. Oh, we may not go searching for lost sheep. Some of you may have gone searching for a lost dog. And I will tell you, when I lose a twenty dollar bill, I will go looking for it.

I remember that I once told you that I had lost a \$5 flash drive that I frantically searched for. I later found it and was extremely happy. That's what we do. To be sure, the Pharisees and the scribes would do those things, too. We understand the searching and the joy of finding.

And yet the Pharisees and scribes were grumbling when Jesus was doing the exact same thing. Why? Because the ones Jesus was looking for were sinners. The lost coin, it was not its fault it was lost. Even that lost sheep may have just wandered off by accident. But those sinners, it is their own fault they are lost. They ought to know better. Or maybe they do know better and just don't care; they just keep on sinning anyhow. So why would Jesus rejoice over a bunch like that? They are people who don't deserve His search, His finding, or His forgiveness.

But maybe that last statement reveals something, too, about us. The coin, the flash drive, the sheep or dog, mean something to us and have value to us. That's why we want them back. So when the Pharisees are grumbling about Jesus eating with sinners is that an indication that they do not value these other people who they call "sinners?"

When we are unwilling to forgive those who have sinned against us is that because we don't value them.. Maybe we'd respond the same way as the Pharisees and

scribes if we saw Jesus in a room filled with those who have hurt us. We may wonder, “What’s He doing? Doesn’t He know who they are?” So perhaps part of what Jesus is doing here is getting us to take a look at ourselves and ask: do I value my coins and sheep, a flash drive or a dog, in other words, do I value my possessions more than I value my neighbor? If so, it’s not just them sinners that need to repent, but this sinner too.

If that’s the case, then Jesus wants to find us. It is not the things of this world that Jesus cares about, it is you and me. It always has been. Since the beginning of time, when Adam and Eve sinned and plunged God’s perfect world into sin, it was not the world that God was concerned about, it was them. He came searching for them in the Garden, to find them, to forgive them, and to promise them a Savior.

It’s a promise He repeated many times. It is a promise we hear in our Old Testament Lesson where He says, **“Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out”** (Ezekiel 34:11). In Ezekiel’s day it was just as it was in Jesus’ day. The people cared more about their coins and sheep than they did about people. So God said to them, I will send them a shepherd, **“My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd”** (Ezekiel 34:23).

The Lord really is not talking about King David, who lived and died many hundreds of years before Ezekiel. The Lord is talking about the Son of David, who would sit on David’s throne forever. The Lord is talking about Jesus.

What Ezekiel prophesied, the Pharisees and

scribes were seeing. God Himself had come to search for and find His sheep. He rejoiced when He found them, even the ones who had wandered away, time after time. Even the ones who had been wandering for a long time; and even the ones who had wandered a long way away.

Jesus came and searched and called. tax collectors and prostitutes. Jesus even called someone like Saul the great persecutor of the church. He wrote about that to Timothy, about how lost he was, but then wrote this, too: **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost”** (1 Timothy 1:15). And if Jesus saves the foremost sinner, then He saves other sinners, too, like you and me.

God is still searching and calling out. Even though Jesus is ascended into heaven, His Spirit is still working through the Word that is proclaimed to reach the hearts of those who hear. It doesn't matter who speaks, what matters is that they hear about the love and forgiveness of Jesus.

Jesus didn't just come to eat with tax collectors and sinners, but came to die for them. He came to take the guilt of all their sins, and ours, upon Himself to atone for them on the cross. He took all of our lostness upon Himself. In fact, so lost did He become that He was completely separated from His Father on the cross, even crying out like a lost lamb, **“My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”** The Son became the sinner. The searcher became the lost. He did it so that sinners could be found, not to continue to sin, but to be set free from sin, both its curse and its dominion.

And so it is. Jesus is calling and forgiving you. He is

not holding your lostness and sins against you, even if you've come here today and repented of the same sin you fell into again this week for the umpteenth time. He and His angels are rejoicing that you are here, found, and receiving His forgiveness.

But there is another story of searching that needs to be mentioned here today, and that is the searching that began this day, 21 years ago: on September 11, 2001. When Tower 1 and then Tower 2 fell, as well as part of the Pentagon, a frantic search began - first for survivors, then, after a while, for the lost. It was a difficult and often gruesome job. They were working 12 to 15 hour days. And though they didn't want to be there, they also didn't want to stop not until the last body, the last of the lost, was found. But sadly, they never found them all. For some, there was nothing to find.

On that site today is a memorial. There are two large holes and in the center of those holes another hole, a black hole that you cannot see the bottom of. It is as if you are looking the tomb of those who were never found.

The tomb that we look into is far different than that. For the One who wasn't found there when the women came to look for Him isn't missing or dead; He's risen and alive. He who spent six hours on the cross and three days in the grave, under the rubble of our sin and death which crushed Him, knows where the body of each and every person is. So that on the Last Day, when He comes again, the next great feast will begin. Then, He will raise all the dead. And all who believe in Jesus will

rejoice to eat and drink with their Savior at the feast which has no end. It is as we heard in our Introit for today, **“Our mourning will be turned into dancing, and we will give thanks to the Lord forever.”** AMEN.

P The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

C **Amen.**

## **Prayer of the Church**

O Father in heaven, we pray to You through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Grant that we may daily recognize that You provide for our every need of body and soul. We praise and bless Your holy name for these gifts from above.

Almighty God, You call pastors and set them to the task of shepherding Your people. Bless them in their work of providing Your gifts to those You have gathered and as they seek those who have wandered away.

Gracious Lord, look with favor on the households of this congregation, and grant that all may live in love that issues from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

O Lord, our King, You appoint princes and all governing authorities. Remember those You have placed in authority over us, and grant that they might fulfill their responsibilities according to Your Word and for the good of Your people.

Lord of life, You heal and deliver. Hear our cries for all who are in need of strength and rescue [*especially* \_\_\_\_\_].

Most merciful God, remember Your baptized children who have wandered from the household of faith. Pursue them as a shepherd who seeks lost sheep. Strengthen their families to persist in prayer and confidence in Your faithfulness.

O Lord, You bring up the souls of Your people from Sheol. Receive our thanks that You restore to life Your people who go down to the pit, and preserve us in faith until we sing Your praises with them in heaven.

Almighty God, all things are Yours, and You have promised to well supply us with all that we need. Give us courage and faith, that we may give a confident “amen” to these prayers, certain that You will give us all that is good and beneficial to our salvation and preserve us from all things harmful, for the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom, with whom and in whom be all honor and glory, both now and forever. **Amen.**

## **Lord’s Prayer**

**C Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.**

## **Benediction**

*LSB 202*

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make His face shine upon you and be  
gracious unto you.  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give  
you peace.

**C Amen.**

## **Acknowledgments**

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