

**Lost and Found****Luke 15:1-7**

There is a tendency to hear this story about the lost sheep and to focus upon the 'lost-ness' of what Jesus is teaching. The tendency is to focus on all the ways, real and imagined, in which people, causes, situations in the world are 'lost', 'forsaken', 'abandoned'.

I think it is more helpful to look at these stories and to focus on the joy that Jesus. The sheep doesn't stay lost for long. This is a story about being found. And when the finding happens, there is rejoicing. Jesus mentions joy and rejoicing twice times in these few verses. Even more than that, when the lost sheep is found, the shepherd invites everyone to join in with the rejoicing. "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."

Of course, context is everything. Our reading began with the Pharisees and scribes grumbling about the amount of time Jesus spent with tax collectors and sinners, the lost people of His day. The grumble from Jesus critics is, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

Jesus' response is to say that He has come into the world not only for the good people, but also for the not so good, and that they are welcome at His table nevertheless, and He tells the story of the lost and the found.

Everyone falls short, or sins, or gets 'lost' at different times in their lives along the way. Jesus reminds us that He is vigilantly searching until all are found. And when the lost are found, heaven itself rejoices. When the lost are found, Jesus invites everyone to rejoice.

Around this Table today, whether we feel we are still amongst the lost, or are simply happy to return knowing that we are already loved by our Lord, we are all 'found' today. There is no more humbling or common human experience than feeling and being lost. No matter how lost people are, the promise is never exhausted. The Shepherd is still searching. God has prepared a place for you here today, and welcomes you to His Table. For here you are found; here you are welcome, and here, with your brothers and sisters in faith, Jesus rejoices that today you have come to be with Him. Remember Him, and be glad and give thanks.

**In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

**Amen**