

The Gospel According to Luke
Luke 15:1-10
Parallel Reading: Matthew 18:10-14

Sermon #65
January 25, 2020

Rejoice!

Rejoice or Grumble

Last week, we examined from God's Word probably one of the most difficult truths from the mouth of Jesus, "... any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33) This Lord's Day we hear one of the greatest truths in the Bible; Jesus rejoices in receiving sinners!

Have you ever really just stepped back and meditated on the fact that Jesus receives sinners? Jesus Christ, God incarnate, the only perfect One in every way did not come to condemn sinners but he came to save sinners. He is the only One, the only truly perfect One, who has the right to condemn sinners and yet He chooses to pardon sinners who come to Him in faith and repentance.

We have before us the first two of three parables concerning Jesus receiving sinners. What I want you to observe this morning is the difference between the attitude of Heaven and that of the Pharisees. One rejoices exceedingly and the other grumbles. The unfaithful Hebrews grumbled against Moses and God repeatedly in Exodus chapter 6 and here, the only place in the New Testament, the self-righteous and self-serving Pharisees and scribes grumble against Jesus.

Jesus first tells the story of a shepherd who has lost one of his sheep and second about a poor woman who had lost one of her coins. Then at the end of each story Jesus pauses with a verse of application and describes for us that while the Pharisees and scribes are grumbling in His midst, the rejoicing in heaven cannot be contained. He tells these parables to make the point that Heaven and Jesus gladly

receives sinners that repent and believe. However, there is the opposite, the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes turn these people away and view them as unwanted.

Please stand and hear the Word of God. As Garth reads Luke 15, verses 1 to 10. “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’”

³“So he told them this parable: ⁴ ‘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? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ 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.’ ⁷ 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.’”

⁸“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? ⁹ 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.’ ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Please be seated. Let me begin our study of God’s Word with prayer.

Lord we come before you to ask you humble us in your presence. Father we have heard Your Word, help us make it useful for each of us and that it will impact and change us. Cause Your Word to ever remind us that we need to always be

repenting, for we are broken sinners that You, by Your grace, have saved. Thank you Father. Amen.

I begin with the beginning, verse 1, “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’” Luke shows us the situation as the Pharisees and scribes were beginning to approach Jesus. The picture is one of lions circling their prey to isolate and look for the weak spot to attack. What was Jesus’ crime? What was it, in Jesus, that caused these Pharisees and scribes so much trouble? The prophet Isaiah knew the answer. Isaiah wrote, “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness ...²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!” (Isaiah 5:20-21) This was the efforts of the Pharisees and it is also how many of the leaders of our world and society and some in the church operate today. Jesus was the opposite of their agendas of deception; he was purity and truth.

Rather than turning away those in society who were viewed as socially and morally compromised, as the religious leaders did, Jesus spent time with them, loving them and teaching them and at times, challenging them. Do you see the dynamic at work here? Tax collectors and sinners were being drawn to Jesus. They were drawing near to this man. What was it about Jesus that attracted these folks? I believe it was, that for possibly the first time, they came to understand they could have a relationship with God and the door for this relationship was the Messiah, Jesus. Access to God was not through ritualistic rules and a works for salvation system but it was through the Gospel of grace. As John wrote, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) These people saw this in Jesus. These tax collectors and sinners, where people regarded and treated as

outcasts from the Jewish religious leaders, they found in Jesus the One who did not despise and reject them. On the other hand, the Pharisees and scribes with their religion that was generally cold and hard towards such people, they were rejected. However, Jesus took a real interest in them and pointed out to them the road to salvation and real life, eternal life.

The Pharisees grumbled because Jesus received sinners. They thought that only the outwardly righteous should be taught in the synagogues and deserved their attention. Jesus showed everyone God's perspective on the lost. For the Pharisees, Jesus, who claimed to be from God, should do things the way they did them. It did not compute in their minds that God would want anything to do with sinners. After all God is perfect and set apart from sin, so He cannot love sinners. But, Jesus came to show us the Father's perspective when it comes to lost sinners.

The one thing that these religious leaders did get right, even though they thought it wrong, was that they did observe correctly the fact that Jesus did receive sinners. Aren't you glad that Jesus receives sinners? I am, for Jesus has saved me, a sinner, who surrendered to Christ.

In this setting of grumbling religious leaders Jesus gives us 3 parables that expose the Pharisees and scribe's wrong attitude and gives the right attitude of his seeking the lost and bringing them back to God, His Father and for those who repent God is their Father also.

The purpose of the grumbling Pharisees was to disqualify Jesus as a Teacher because of his unconventional practices of fellowshiping and even eating with sinners. What we should understand, it can be wrong, in some cases, to eat with sinners. As Paul made clear, [“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? ...¹⁵ Or what portion does a](#)

believer share with an unbeliever?” (2 Corinthians 6:14-15) But here, Jesus is not just eating with sinners; he is eating with sinners who have repented. The twist Luke records and Jesus’ stories point out in the end it is these repentant sinners who are made righteous, much more righteous than the outwardly self-righteous Pharisees.

Rejoice with Me

The first point Jesus makes is that any shepherd worth anything will be concerned when all his sheep are not where they are supposed to be. Reading at verse 3, “So he told them this parable: ⁴ ‘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? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ 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.**’ Ninety-nine are in the sheepfold but one is lost. Did a wolf get it? Is it alive? Is it hurt? Time is of the essence. The shepherd bunches the flock together for safety and goes out into the wilderness looking for the one lost sheep. I really love this parable. It was not 10 sheep that had gone missing but one, just one. The Good Shepherd is concerned for the one. For a shepherd, the loss of one lamb would be considered an acceptable loss in the wilderness for there are still 99 left. But, our Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, is not willing that one of His lambs would perish. Dear church, do you remember when the Good Shepherd found you? Do you remember when you were hanging over the edge of the cliff looking at eternal doom and the Good Shepherd rescued you? Do you remember when you were spiritually dead and Jesus gave life to your soul? Notice, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, does not give up, he searches until he finds the

one lost lamb. Out of the billions of people on planet earth he did not give up until you were with him – he will not allow any the Father has called to be lost.

I love the picture Jesus gives here - the shepherd lifts up the lost lamb, placing it upon His shoulders and carries it back to the sheepfold. Our Lord refuses to allow His sheep to be lost. He takes the initiative. Salvation is of the Lord. Like the lost lamb who has gone his own way, we too rebel and leave the fold of God. Our Lord acts in love when He does not wait for our permission or even our obedience. He grabs us where we are and lifts us up onto His shoulders and carries us, showing us the right path to return to the fold. When Jesus told this parable he may have been thinking of Moses' writing, **“The LORD your God who goes before you ... ³¹ and in the wilderness ... the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.”**

(Deuteronomy 1:30-31) These images spoken by Moses and Jesus surely inspired the poem, *Footprints in the Sand*. (Authorship is greatly disputed and the subject of lawsuits) Let me read this poem to you.

One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.

But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you

Never, ever, during your trials and testings.

When you saw only one set of footprints,

It was then that I carried you."

Back to Jesus' parable, the point he makes to the religious leaders is that their role is to be the shepherds of Israel and yet, they were not willing to care for the sheep. Their actions actually served to scatter the sheep, working against God and exposing the sheep to the wolves prowling this world. This imagery takes one back to Ezekiel 34, verses 1 to 10 where the prophet proclaimed the prophecy against the religious leaders who were to serve as shepherds of God's people but instead allowed the sheep to be scattered and killed. I will read just 2 verses of the 10, you might want to read the rest of them this afternoon, verses 2 and 5 says, "Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? ...⁵ So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts." Jesus is not an earthly shepherd who fails, but the only Good Shepherd and when he brings a lost lamb home; He rejoices and now notice who else rejoices.

Rejoice in Heaven

In verse 7 we read, "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." Heaven joins the Lord in rejoicing over the sinner who by grace sees his sin and repents. Can you see - the myriads of saints in heaven shouting hallelujah as each lost soul becomes a child of God by Jesus' mercy and grace?

We observe in this short parable that the line is drawn. The clear difference is seen between the self-righteous, lost and grumbling religious leaders and God of heaven full of love and grace. Heaven is rejoicing and the religious leaders are grumbling. Pharisees are complaining that Jesus receives sinners and heaven cannot contain its joy. This uncontainable joy is over each sinner who repents.

Let me ask, what might keep someone from repenting? Once God begins to work in the heart of a lost person and the person begins to see their sin. Repentance is the next step. Sometimes repentance can be resisted because the person may think that God is like men who use our sins against us. If I repent then God will know my sin and I will be punished. The exact opposite is true. God already knows all your sins and when a sinner repents; God is not angry but is happy at our heart's repentance, God desires to heal your broken heart and heaven is overjoyed.

What angers God are sinners who do not repent. Never think coming to Christ by faith and repentance will make your case worse. There may be some pain with coming to Christ, as you come to the realization of your sins, but God will heal and heaven will rejoice and your life will know the love, grace and peace of God for eternity – now that is cause for heaven to rejoice.

Rejoice in Finding the Lost

Jesus continues with the second short parable. Reading at verse 8, “**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? ⁹ 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.’**” Here is an image similar to the first parable. The lost lamb is replaced with a lost coin. These 10 coins may well have been those saved over several years as her dowry, so, there are only 10 and the loss of 1 is

greater where the shepherd lost 1 in 100; she has lost 10% and she did not have near as much to start with as the shepherd. Next week we will study the loss of 1 son out of 2. With each of these parables the lost is felt more, 1 loss of 100, 1 loss of 10 and 1 loss of 2, but what is important is that Jesus will lose none. He does not give up the search, as man would. These parables deal with completeness; heaven will be filled with every single person God has called and Jesus will lose none.

The homes in villages at the time of Jesus were much like our adobe homes here, they were built with clay bricks. They had small windows and often a single window and door on the north side because even though the window and door let in light they would also let in heat in the summer and cold in the winter. In the inside of the homes, the light was dim and it was shadowy, so in order to see better, to find the coin she lights a candle. Homes were simple with only the furniture needed and she begins sweeping the floor to find the coin. Just like the shepherd she is determined to find the lost and become complete again. Upon finding the coin she rejoices. As she rejoices, she calls her friends and neighbors saying, **“Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.”** Rejoice with me! Jesus and heaven rejoice when the lost is found and saved. This is just one purpose of baptism; that the lost sinner was found and repented and gives his life to Christ and we rejoice, the church rejoices with them together with Jesus and heaven.

Christianity is the only religion in which God comes seeking mankind. He diligently searches like the shepherd. He diligently keeps at the searching until all His lost sheep and lost coins and his children who have lost their way are found. God rejoices, but not alone, heaven rejoices and Christ’s church rejoices. Being a community means we support each other, care for each other, feel each other’s pain and rejoice in each other’s lives as Christians together. When one becomes

Christian, they become the enemy of the prince of this world, and there is safety in being with God's flock, they become a child of God and he loves each of his children beyond all understanding and they become part of Christ's church that is called to love each other with the love of Christ.

Sinners are drawn to Christ by his love, a love the world simply does not have or understand. Christ's church is to be his openly seen love for sinners in this world. My beloved, how are we doing in seeking and loving the lost?

We also see in these two parables that Jesus spared no expense in His seeking out the lost. He came from the Father in heaven to earth, He lived among those who despised and hated him. His life was given in payment to redeem His lost sheep. As his followers we are called to express this same determination in sharing his gospel with the lost and loving them.

Application

Rejoice in the fact that Jesus comes seeking lost sinners. He searches until He finds all that are His. Have joy that heaven rejoices over sinners who repent, which includes each of us. Jesus receives sinners, praise God in heaven for without Jesus there is no hope. However, the Pharisees made up a group of people who did not see their need to come to Jesus in repentance. They did not believe they were sinners in need of a Savior and they were self-righteous and felt they were not sinners or they could hide their sins and therefore, they condemned themselves. We live among people with the same attitude and Christ calls use to separate from them and seek those lost who see their need for a Savior.

The Unbelieving Lost: Heaven is not rejoicing over people who believe that they are righteous as a result of their works. In other words, these religious leaders

thought they could do enough religious things to please God and earn their salvation. Because every person ever born is a sinner, they need to repent. They thought they were much better than the poor and the outcast, but Jesus tells them they are wrong. He basically tells them that the very people that causes you to grumble - causes heaven to rejoice.

If you are lost and you see your sin as a barrier between you and God, come to Jesus and trust Him by faith and seek repentance. Jesus ends this parable saying, “Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Saved and Repenting Believers: Know, my beloved, that Christians need to also live lives of constant faith and repentance. The Holy Spirit residing within us will cause us to continually see more of our sin that needs to be dealt with. Come to Christ with that sin, confess it and repent from it. Seek His forgiveness and live differently as a result.

The tables had been turned on the religious leaders. They thought they were ok with God, however, Jesus showed them differently. Those who had been rejected by man, Jesus received. Let us live by God’s grace and the faith he has placed in our hearts and souls by His Spirit that lives within us. Amen!