

Lessons for Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 11, 2022

Psalm 119:169-176 ~ *We cry out for the Lord's help as lost sheep in need of their shepherd.*

Ezekiel 34:11-24 ~ *God's people, like sheep scattered by wicked leaders, will be gathered by God Himself.*

1 Timothy 1:(5-11) 12-17 ~ *The gratitude of a sinner rescued by God's grace is seen in Paul's commitment to Christ.*

Luke 15:1-10 ~ *The joy of finding sheep and coins reflects God's joy over sinners rescued by His love.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: God Couldn't Care Less!

When the people of God were oppressed by wicked shepherds, God cared so much that He wouldn't stand by and watch His flock destroyed. He promised a Good Shepherd who would redeem His sheep. When Paul persecuted those who followed Jesus, God reached out in mercy to call him to faith and apostleship. When sinners are found by God's grace and restored like lost sheep and lost coins, God and all the hosts of heaven rejoice, because God, who wants all to be saved, just cannot care any less than His great love will allow.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Father in heaven, I pray that You always remind me of Your love that reaches out to me through all circumstances. Let me hear Your call and be fed with Your Word of life. Help me also speak that call to those who are lost, so they too may know Your all-encompassing love in Christ Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: Sometimes in order to increase profits we act as though people are expendable. When we understand how much God values each person, we will know that material goods are expendable in order to touch people with God's blessing of grace.

OFFERING PRAYER: The fact, O Lord, that You have rescued us
Gives proof of Your great love for everyone.
If new-found souls cause such a joyful fuss,
Then use these gifts to further Kingdom fun. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Jesus does not teach that a lamb in the flock is worth two in the brush! Every lamb is precious in God's sight! We seem to think that searching for the lost diminishes the value of those who are safe. Searching for the lost does not sanction their condition. The fact is, God's rescuing us in Christ says much more about His love than about our intrinsic value, and our efforts at outreach reflect God's joy rather than our approval.

Questions to Consider: What's a person worth?

- What are the forces that scatter God's sheep?
- Was St. Paul worth more to God before or after God rescued him?
- What do the man with sheep and the woman with the coins have in common?
- How can we reflect God's love for the lost?

Bonus on next page: Ryan's Mart - Charleston
Old Slave Mart Museum

Ryan's Mart – Charleston
Old Slave Mart Museum

You arch of stuccoed brick
what sad scenes did you observe
in street and courtyard nick
before your iron gate?

Children torn from parents' grasp,
women severed from their men,
arms out reached and voices gasped.
Agony captured every heart.

You pillared market wall
what pain and suffering did you hide
within your recessed hall
from wary passersby?

Brawny arms and straining back
oiled to glisten in the light,
bodies young and strong and black
to work long days in blazing heat.

You auction table block
what wares upon your walk
were shown and sold, livestock
to fetch the greatest coin?

Now in your chambers, truths unfold,
museum artifacts revealed.
A dreadful story here is told
of cruel oppression, human shame.

- Gilbert Franke, May 4, 2021