

## JOY IN HEAVEN

### Luke 15:1-10

<sup>1</sup>One day when many tax collectors and other outcasts came to listen to Jesus, <sup>2</sup>the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law started grumbling, “This man welcomes outcasts and even eats with them!” <sup>3</sup>So Jesus told them this parable:

<sup>4</sup>“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them – what do you do? You leave the other ninety-nine sheep in the pasture and go looking for the one that got lost until you find it. <sup>5</sup>When you find it, you are so happy that you put it on your shoulders <sup>6</sup>and carry it back home. Then you call your friends and neighbours together and say to them, ‘I am so happy I found my lost sheep. Let us celebrate!’ <sup>7</sup>In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine respectable people who do not need to repent.

<sup>8</sup>“Or suppose a woman who has ten silver coins loses one of them – what does she do? She lights a lamp, sweeps her house, and looks carefully everywhere until she finds it. <sup>9</sup>When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together, and says to them, ‘I am so happy I found the coin I lost. Let us celebrate!’ <sup>10</sup>In the same way, I tell you, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.”

*This is the shorter form reading. The full Gospel reading continues with the parable of the Lost or Prodigal Son, Luke 15:11-32. We looked at these verses on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.*

*Other Readings: Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14; Psalm 51:1-2, 10-11, 15, 17;  
1 Timothy 1:12-17*



### LECTIO:

Once again the ‘authorities’ are outraged. Luke tells us the Jewish religious leaders criticised Jesus for his friendly attitude to ‘sinners’.

Tax collectors topped the ‘sinner list’. They were hated by the Jews because they took money for the pagan occupiers, the Romans. In fact one of Jesus’ own disciples was once a tax collector - Levi, traditionally thought to be Matthew (Mark 2: 13-17).

In Luke 15 Jesus tells the Pharisees three parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.

The parable of the lost sheep underlines how far the shepherd will go to find just one missing sheep from his flock and his great joy when the lost sheep is found and returned to his care and protection.

The parable of the lost coin reinforces the point. Again, something of value is lost. The woman searches everywhere until she finds it. The fact that she still has nine other coins doesn’t matter. One is lost and must be found.

Both the shepherd and the woman are filled with joy when what was lost is restored to them. Similarly all heaven rejoices when a sinner repents - a broken relationship is restored.

The lost or prodigal son is the third parable. The lost son returns a pauper having frittered his inheritance away. He returns in repentance expecting nothing more than to be his father’s servant. The father has yearned for his son’s return. He runs to greet him with loving open arms. A great celebration is prepared.

The reaction of the elder son brings us right back to the response of the Pharisees. Jesus reaches out to sinners and celebrates when they repent. Jesus warns his listeners, (and us) not to feel self righteous or act as though we are better than others. We must all rely on God’s mercy and forgiveness.



### MEDITATIO:

- What aspects of these parables strike you most?
- Consider the attitude of the Pharisees compared to the shepherd, the woman and the father in these parables. What can we learn from this?
- Meditate on this verse:
 

‘This is a true saying, to be completely accepted and believed; Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ 1 Timothy 1:15



### ORATIO:

Use the words of Psalm 51 as a personal prayer. Thank God for his great mercy.

Pray for the ‘lost sheep’ to return to Jesus. The Holy Spirit may bring someone specific to mind as you pray.



### CONTEMPLATIO:

Consider the role of the shepherd and the lengths that he will go to look after his sheep. Allow the love of our Great Shepherd to enfold you.