

still waters

home church studies

psalm 14

[Worship]

1 Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is no one who does good. 2 The LORD looks down from heaven on humankind to see if there are any who are wise, who seek after God. 3 They have all gone astray, they are all alike perverse; there is no one who does good, no, not one. 4 Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the LORD? 5 There they shall be in great terror, for God is with the company of the righteous. 6 You would confound the plans of the poor, but the LORD is their refuge. 7 O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When the LORD restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

Consider:

[Think & Pray...]

This Sunday's passages urge us to view the world from God's vantage point. In the psalm and Jeremiah passage, God laments our failure to recognize him, like a parent or teacher grieving a child's self-destructive behavior. Jesus has this same tone when he implores the Pharisees to see what he sees. He wants them to enter into his view of the world—to delight at the returned precious thing, to grieve over the lost.

God looks at the pain we cause each other and despairs over our small-minded harshness. Our laws for criminals and immigrants reflect compassion fatigue, embodying the feeling that for too long law-abiding citizens have been taken advantage of. And in the din comes the voice of God, imploring us to remember who we are and where we've come from.

Jesus' "99 righteous people who do not need to repent" are the psalmist's fools who say there is no God. All are in need of repentance, as Paul reminds us—he most of all. Yet he has been received by God's grace. Paul's awareness of his past sin is only part of his sense of amazing grace. God's holiness and power at work in the world are the true agents of conversion.

Outside of this grace, too much is in our hands, and our families, our church, and our nation become ours to protect and promote at all costs. Within it, we own nothing yet are claimed by the owner of all. We get to



participate in the redemption story trusting that the outcome is not in our hands.

Worship is the gateway to this grace. In an age of over-stimulation, a return to awe is the best route to returning to God. Abraham Heschel wrote, "Awe is a sense for the transcendence, for the reference everywhere to God who is beyond all things....The loss of awe is the great block to insight. A return to

reverence is the first prerequisite for a revival of wisdom, for the discovery of the world as an allusion to God." Open yourself to the immortal, invisible God only wise.

Who are your/our tax collectors and sinners (those "coming near to listen"—Lk 15.1); who are our scribes and Pharisees (those who are "grumbling" and judging—Lk 15.2); and who are our sheep (those who we leave everything to rescue—Lk 15.4-7)?

When were you a "blasphemer, a persecutor, and a [person] of violence? (1 Tim 1.13) And how did you "received mercy, so that in [you], as the foremost, Jesus Christ [had displayed] the utmost patience, making [you] an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life.

luke 15 .1-10

[The Scripture]

1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3 So he told them this parable: 4 "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and 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 of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 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 in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."