



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:

[Words]

The news of the day is that disqualified people are welcomed by God. God's great joy is to welcome the wayward and the disobedient back into the company of the blessed.

The gospel reading presents two parables by Jesus. Two images of recovery are utilized: a lost sheep recovered and a lost coin found. In both cases the recovery leads to the invitational imperative, "Rejoice with me" (Luke 15: 6, 9). The presenting problem is that "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them" (verse 2). Jesus frontally violates social custom, with special reference to the rigid rules about eating. His transgression of social expectation evokes great hostility. These stories are about more than a shepherd or a woman. They are about "joy in heaven" (verse 7) and "joy in the presence of the angels of God" (verse 10). They are about the welcoming posture of God who accepts those whom exclusionary society will not accept.

In the epistle, Paul offers himself as a case study in God's mercy. His own experience attests to God's love that "overflow[s]" (1 Timothy 1:14) and exhibits God's patience. Paul ends in doxology, the only appropriate response to God's large generosity.

When we pay attention, we are sure to be surprised by the presentation of God, who exposes us with our "possessions," who welcomes us back, and who plunges us into new thoughts and new actions about our resources. It is clear that gospel faith puts before us challenges and possibilities that would otherwise elude us completely. These challenges and possibilities do not admit of easy resolution. They do, nevertheless, give us more than enough to think and decide about.

—Walter Bruggemann

[Scripture]

Luke 15.1-10

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."

Question:

What kind of God would hang with rabble!? What kind of rabble would be attracted to the words and attitudes of this obviously unrighteous clergy-man?

Who do you believe Jesus is talking about when He refers to the "Lost?" Your answer carries serious implications... Careful!

Also, read for yourself this week, 1 Timothy 1.12-17