

Jesu Juva

“The God Who Comes For Sinners”

Text: Luke 15:1-10; Micah 7:18-20

Whenever I’ve seen a “lost and found” anywhere, there’s always something in it. And most of that stuff is there because either the person didn’t notice it was gone, didn’t care, or didn’t think it worth the effort to get it back.

It is not so with God. We heard tonight that He **notices** each and every one that is missing. Even one out of a hundred, so easy to overlook, He notices.

And He **cares**. He is not content to still have nine coins out of ten, or ninety-nine sheep out of a hundred. No, He will search diligently, carefully, thoroughly, until He finds it.

And with what **effort**? He will search among the thorns and thickets, the rocks and caves, the heights and depths, for that sheep. He will move the furniture, sweep the corners, turn over everything in the house, to find that coin. And for you, even more. He is relentless, single-minded, focused, determined. There is no “give up” in your Saviour.

And **worth** the effort? Not only is it worth the effort, but He rejoices. And not only rejoices, but wants all of heaven and earth, all of creation to rejoice with him! Think Times Square on New Year’s Eve, *only bigger*. And this whenever a sinner repents. Whenever a sinner is forgiven. Whenever a sinner is found and saved. That’s the joy of the Lord over each and every one.

That’s the picture of Himself that Jesus gives us today. A picture that caused the prophet Micah to marvel: *Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression?*

But there is another picture here too. An opposite one. Of forgiveness not so gladly given or joyfully received. It is of the Pharisees and scribes who grumbled against Jesus, saying: *This man receives sinners and eats with them*. This was not how they thought it should be. Love so lavishly given and forgiveness so free.

It is a picture we are so often in. When we mutter an insincere “I forgive you” when someone hurts us. When we resent and doubt deathbed conversions. When we think some too far gone, too sinful, too evil for forgiveness. When we hold grudges and plot revenge, because we want people to pay for what they have done to us, and not let them off the hook too easy. Like the Pharisees and scribes, how often do we not want love so lavishly given or forgiveness so free . . . *for them?*

But know when you think and act that way, there is also rejoicing taking place. But it too is as opposite as this picture. Or to paraphrase the words of Jesus: *Just so, I tell you, there is more joy in hell and before the angels of satan over one sinner who refuses to forgive or to repent.*

So don't give satan and his crew the satisfaction. Repent, and forgive. But more than just to spite them, do so because this is the love and forgiveness **given you**. Lost you. Wandering you. Sinful you. This is the love of Jesus who took your sins upon Himself and bore them on the cross, enduring the wrath and condemnation of God against them in your place. That you never know what that's like. That you know only the lavish love and free forgiveness of your Saviour - free because He paid for it with His own blood. And that you rejoice in Him.

For you are the one Jesus came for and is still coming for and searching for. You are the one worth it in His eyes. You are the one He will not give up on. You are the one He rejoices over. Rejoicing as He makes you His own in baptism. Rejoicing when you confess your sins and receive His absolution. Rejoicing when He feeds you with His Body and Blood. These are not obligations, but gifts, from Him, to you. These are Him lifting you up on His shoulders and keeping you in His care.

***This man receives sinners and eats with them.*** The Pharisees and scribes meant that as an accusation and condemnation of Jesus. But it was in reality spot on theology, a perfect confession of Jesus and what He had come to do. That He is a God of compassion and mercy. A God who does not distance Himself from us but comes to be with us. A God who forgives, removing our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west. Removing them, instead of us, from His presence. That we may live with Him in His kingdom, rejoicing, forever.

For yes, you're worth it.

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.