

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 15, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“Rejoice, I Have Found my Sheep”

Based on Luke 15:1-10

It must have been a scary thing; a little lamb huddled under a thorny bush as the dark shadows of evening fell upon the hills, and a cold rain began to slap against its face; his plaintive calls for help lost in the whistle of the wind. It was hopeless. The lamb was caught, the curly wool twisted in the branches. And cry as he might, there was no one to hear him, save the wolves who would soon begin to prowl. The lamb was ‘lost’.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. (v1)

Jesus was speaking to another group of ‘lost’ people: sinners and tax collectors. Now don’t you just love that: let’s group everyone else who doesn’t really fit into our little picture of the ‘perfect’ life and call them all ‘sinners.’ And those Revenue Canada people, well now, they get special mention: extra special sinners. That pretty much wraps things up, now doesn’t it? Anyone I don’t like, don’t associate with, don’t understand, or don’t agree with; we’ll just push

them all aside and call them sinners: bad people, hopeless people, not my kind of people, lost people.

‘REJOICE
WITH ME; I
HAVE FOUND
MY LOST
SHEEP.’
~LUKE 15:6

- Some of these ‘sinners’ may have been from the wrong side of the tracks, and needed to be treated with care and caution.
- Some of these ‘sinners’ may have been down on their luck and needed a second chance, not another label.
- Some of the ‘sinners’ may have had a health issue which did not allow them to work, so they were seen as useless and a burden to society.
- Some of these ‘sinners’ carried with them a tainted family history which gossip would never let them forget, and prevented them from being welcomed into communities.
- Some of these ‘sinners’ were of a different ethnic

background, or colour of skin, or accent of speech, which made it clear ‘they were not from around here!’

- Some of these ‘sinners’ were like the tax collectors, who worked for the ‘enemy’ unwillingly, so that they could put food on the table for their children.

And like a nosy neighbor leaning into the line fence so they can hear what was going on in the next yard a little better, the Pharisees whispered and ‘muttered’ (v2) amongst themselves:

“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” (v2)

Jesus, knowing full well that critical eyes and minds were watching Him, related the story of the shepherd, who took the risk of leaving the flock of fat, profit making sheep to the wolves and the elements, and braved the winds and cold rain of the storm to search for one sheep, lost somewhere in the darkness.

Two things happened simultaneously:

- o The ‘sinners’ in the room perked up their ears, and their hearts began to sing,

just a little. "He understands. He's talking about me. I am important. I am not lost. I am right here, but nobody 'sees' me. But He sees me!"

o The nosy Pharisees behind the fence looked at one another and said, "Well that's a foolish thing to do. What happens if the rest of the sheep are stolen, or run away, or the barn gets hit by lightning while the shepherd is out looking. It's one sheep. Cut your losses and get on with the day."

My friends, we have all been lost at some time:

I remember as a young child, forgetting that my parents had stepped out of the house for a few minutes, and suddenly thinking I was all alone, forever. That feeling has stayed with me to this day.

- When difficult decisions need to be made, we feel lost.
- When death or disease comes upon those we love, we feel lost.
- When tough financial moments arise, we can appreciate the women who swept and swept again to find that lost coin, because sometimes, we are lost without even that little bit.
- When caught in family strife we are often at a loss at what to do or say.

- When friendships have soured, we are lost for companionship and a listening ear.
- When we find ourselves unexpectedly alone, we can get lost in the deafening silence.

In those moments,

- o Profit and loss does not matter
- o Logic and reason do not matter.
- o How you arrived at the place you find yourself: by circumstance or bad planning does not even matter

What matters is this:

**Someone is looking for you.
Someone is looking out for you.**

**Someone is coming for you.
He will not abandon you.
He will not give up on you.
He will not stop looking for you.**

**And when He finds you,
regardless of the how's and
why's and the scolding you
may or may not deserve, He
will say:**

*"Rejoice! I Have Found My
Sheep!"*

~D.L. Moody

- When you find yourself caught, stuck, stalled, or abandoned, He will wrap His arms around you warmly and say, "I've got your back."
- When you have gone the wrong direction, made a bad choice, or deliberately turned your back on your

back on the right choice, He will search for you and say "I understand."

- When you push Him away, He will wait for you.
- When you don't want to believe, He will sit quietly with you.

- And when you finally accept that you are lost, He will find you. And He will say, "Rejoice! I Have Found My Sheep!"

I just want to be a sheep.
Amen.

*I just wanna be a sheep
(baa, baa, baa, baa)
I just wanna be a sheep
(baa, baa, baa, baa)
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
I just wanna be a sheep
~Brian Howard*