

MEDITATION (Luke 15:1-10)

A good friend reminded me this week that thanksgiving is hard. Not the preparations, nor the clean-up after the meal. No the act of being thankful; the attitude of giving thanks is hard. And if ever that was true, it is true this Thanksgiving.

So often this weekend offers us a chance to celebrate and indulge and gather family and friends together with abandon - to enjoy the last few days of really excellent fall weather - but this weekend comes with a mixed message. We are asked by health officials to be cautious about our public behaviour. Large gatherings are being gently discouraged. In parts of the country many of the opportunities that presented themselves through the late summer have been rescinded. We are - many of us - trying to reconcile what we have lost (or what is missing) with the invitation to give thanks.

A couple of weeks ago, I gave you homework; asked you to look carefully for things to be thankful for. This was my 'three-week-thanksgiving' experiment. So, How are you doing with that? I'm not afraid to report that I am not having much luck. I keep slipping back into grief; I am occasionally overwhelmed by the fact that nothing is really normal. My thoughts are occupied with what is lost.

That's why I ventured down a different scriptural path today - choosing a gospel that seemed (on Tuesday) to speak of the joy of finding and being found. I wanted the text to lead me to something that would put a cherry on the top of our three-week-thanksgiving, and what I got for my troubles was writers block. Kristy was right. Thanksgiving is hard.

These parables of losing and finding are not about sheep and coins - they are not allegory, with each part of the tale representing something tangible in our own situation - these parables work as metaphor,

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urging us to think about where we find ourselves in relation to God and to one another. The stray comment about joy in heaven over repentant sinners is the proof of that. Repentance is not about waiting to be found (like a lost sheep or a misplaced coin) - the lost objects in the parables do nothing to make the finding easy. The mystery and miracle of the parables ***is that we are both the lost and those who seek***. God is both lost to us in our sin AND seeking us because we are loved. There is no simple path to joy in the language of the parables because there is no simple path to righteousness in the course of our lives.

Here in a season of loss, we gather to remember what it is that does bless us - our fellowship, our common desire to follow Jesus, our common baptism and the mystery of our connection to God through word and sacrament. Here in a season of difficult thanksgiving, we have a parable that reminds us that we are seeking ***and*** being sought - we are the cause for joy ***and*** have reason to celebrate ourselves. By faith we discover that life is not a series of 'either/or' moments. Life in Christ is the continual discovery that we are both/and.

Today we give thanks for faith demonstrated and promises renewed even as we mourn what has been lost and look desperately for ways to restore what once brought us joy.

We were meant to struggle with these things because we are both lost ***and*** found; we are each the desperate searcher ***and*** the joyfully discovered. This is part of the mystery that makes thanksgiving hard.

Even so, let us be thankful. For in the recognition of the gifts that hide among the trials of life, there we will find true joy.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Amen