



Wednesday Prayer

14th Sunday after Pentecost – One lost sheep...is that me?

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he told them this parable: “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? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 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.’ 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.

Luke 15:1-7

The parables of Jesus always bring us to wondering. I wonder what the Pharisees answer to Jesus would be. I wonder what *my* answer to Jesus would be. Leave the 99 sheep in the wilderness and go after one that is lost? Risk it all for the one? Leave the more comfortable and safe place (with the 99) to venture out into the wilderness alone in search of one?

What if they heard this parable and put themselves in the position of the one who was lost, hearing the message that Jesus would risk it all, for them? Seems a bit unlikely, as the passage begins with them grumbling that “This fellow welcomes sinners” as if they aren’t sinners themselves. How quick are we to judge others as sinners when we may be the ones who are lost? Maybe Jesus’ parable reached some of those Pharisees (and us) in a new way, thinking about the ways they and we are lost.

Recently I’ve been spending time meeting with and listening to others’ stories as we all try to figure out our next steps as the Church, as a family, as young adults, as business or community leaders, as mental health providers, as pastors and youth leaders. Relating to our work as Cherish All Children, I’ve been asking about how young people are struggling and about how we can make new, real connections. What is the story of the one who is feeling lost? I think about how we can enter into these stories with compassion and the love of Christ, rejoicing in the ways we might deepen a relationship and come out of the wilderness together.

We don’t have concrete answers to these questions, especially in the complex times we are living in. For me, I will continue to wonder where Jesus is calling me to go in this parable.

Jesus, loving shepherd, equip us to listen and tend to the needs of those who may feel lost among us. And when we are the lost, help us to find our way out of the wilderness and into the safety of your loving community, Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.