

**Pentecost 17 (24 Ordinary Sunday) Year C**  
**11 September 2016**

**Readings:** Jeremiah 4: 11-12, 22-28, 1 Timothy 1:12-17, Luke 15:1-10, Psalm 51:1-10

**Theme:** God's forgiveness and Mercy

"Just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over the Ninety-nine righteous person who had no need for repentance

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit  
Amen

My dear friends, this morning's gospel provides us with materials for reflection - the individual at the centre. The emphasis is on a gracious God who is so much in love with us that he goes out to seek the lost and the forgotten.

It is shocking always to see how so many multinational companies cut the workforce without any consideration for the individuals they are letting go. For them it is a matter of profit rather than the welfare of the workers.

This is where Jesus story of the Lost sheep and the Lost Coin come in. What is at stake in the two stories is the value of the individual. But one might ask why all the fuss on one wretched sheep or one miserable coin. To a Good shepherd, the sheep is important and precious. The coin that the woman lost even though, not much by our standard must have been of great value to her hence the diligent search for it.

This takes me back to a story about a group of people who were concerned about what they saw as the morality decay of young people, decided to build a reformatory for boys. They invited a well known educator to advise them on what to do. In his speech he made a plea for a passionate and human, and capable teachers; He concluded his speech by saying that if the reformatory were to save One boy from moral depravity, it would have justified the money and labour spent on it.

Afterwards a member of the board approached him and said, 'Didn't you get a bit carried away there? Would all the money and labour be justified if we save only one child? Then came the answer (if it were my boy - yes

If you were to ask the shepherd, 'Was all the time and effort you spent in looking for that one sheep justified, he would have given the same reply, Yes, the sheep is your sheep.

We know that Jesus was not taking about sheep but about us his people. Jesus cares about everyone of us even when we have offended him. Just as the shepherd was anxious about his flock and wants them back immediately. That is what he expects us to do. The state of our offences should not hold us back

In the first reading we hear the Prophet Jeremiah warning the people of Israel about God's dissatisfaction with them because they were disobeying God's law. God as a kind God has set up a Covenant with his people and the onus is on them to fulfil their part of the bargain. The people of Israel however kept doing their own thing for that he threatened punishment. At the same time in his mercy he offered them time to repent and return to him. **Yes, God is even present even with those who are breaking their exclusive relationship with him, at their baptism. Angry yes, but still merciful, offering them time to return.**

In the second reading Paul in his first letter to Timothy, gives thanks to the Lord for all he has done for him. He reflects on his personal history. He describes himself before his conversion as a blasphemer, a persecutor and a man of violence, one who was out to make sure that Christianity was extinguished. He was like the sinful son in the parable of the Gospel. He was delivered from all these, not by Moses pleading as he did for the people of God on Mount Sinai but by Christ Jesus who came to the world to save sinners. In the Gospel, through parables Jesus justifies his concern for sinners. For the Pharisees, this would have been unthinkable.

The demand placed on would be believers did not put off the crowd from coming to listen to him

Jesus understands God. He is like the shepherd looking for the sheep. He is like the woman looking for her coin.

God is ever willing to come to help without pre conditions.

Today, let us come back to him, he will receive us with an open arm.

In the name.....