Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)2022

Christ's parables always teach us something about **God**, but they also teach us something about **ourselves**.

The parables we just listened to clearly highlight **God's mercy**, his active love for sinners. As he loves so must we love. It does not mean we love sin but we love the sinner who is before us.

These parables also give us an answer to the most **difficult and urgent question** that the human family has had to face in every generation: **what is the meaning of our lives**?

First, the parable of the **lost sheep**:

* When a sheep is lost and separated from the flock, it is **helpless and vulnerable**.
* It **needs** the flock and the shepherd to protect and guide it.
* Just so, every human person is created to find meaning and fulfillment in **communion** with God and others - thus the two great commandments of loving God and loving our neighbor.
* We were not created to be **isolated, self-sufficient islands**; we are meant to **depend on God and others** as we pursue happiness.

Second, the parable of the **lost coin**:

* The lost coin is **completely without value** unless it is **possessed** by its **owner,**unless it is**part of the household's economy**.
* Even if it had been a **gold piece** worth 1000 day's wages, it would be **completely worthless** if it stayed **buried in the dust** under the sofa - it would be of **absolutely no use** to anyone.
* Likewise, our **actions and efforts** in life only have **real value** when they are **connected to the mission of the Church**, the mission of building up Christ's Kingdom.
* That mission is to work both as individuals and as a community to make disciples. In the last chapter of St Matthew: And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (Matthew 28:18-20,).
* Outside of the Kingdom we can **do things** and **have adventures** that appear exciting, but they lack the **eternal value** that they are meant to have, just like the coin that was lost.

Both parables reiterate the **same lesson**: our lives can only find meaning and fulfillment **through** Christ, **with** Christ, and **in** Christ.

 Christ is **our** good shepherd.  He has **searched** us out and brought us back **home** many times.

But he does not want to do everything **by himself**.  He wants **us** to be good shepherds **too**.

In fact, that is his **favorite way** of finding lost sheep and gathering lost coins: by **sending us out to bring them in**.

* His way is calling us to **share** more fully in the **joy of his Kingdom**. It is not solely the responsibility of one person but of all people.
* The common denominator of these parables is the **joy** felt once whatever was **lost** has once again been **found**. We can recover that joy and express that joy at this moment and in our day to day lives
* The friends of the woman who found her coin are **joyful**, and they celebrate with her. But the woman **herself** is indescribably **more** joyful.
* When Jesus works through us to bring our friends, family members, colleagues, and acquaintances **closer to him**, he is giving us a chance to **experience** that kind of joy **more intensely**.

Jesus came **all the way** from heaven to earth in order to rescue his lost sheep.

When he asks us to go a little bit out of our way in order to **encourage or serve** our neighbor,

* to **visit** the sick,
* to **share our faith** with someone who is searching for life's meaning,
* he is giving us a **chance** to participate in **his very own mission**.

This is the **only** mission that makes our actions on earth reverberate into eternity.

Maybe some of us can think of some **specific** sheep who are wandering.  Let's **promise** Christ that this week we will do our best to **bring them back**.

For the rest of us, let's ask Christ to make use of us this week to **find** a lost coin or **rescue** a lost sheep.

If we ask **sincerely**, there's **no way** he'll be able to say no.