

Proper 19c 2019  
Church of the Redeemer, Greenville, SC  
September 15, 2019

Exodus 32:7-14   Psalm 41   1 Timothy 1:12-17   Luke 15:1-10

**“Being found”**

Along the wilderness journey, we see God providing the people with many meaningful ways to access God. The people access God through Moses and thunder, through the law on tablets of stone, through the tabernacle, a cloud and fire. Manna feeds people; serpents bite and do not kill; a smashed rock yields water ... how many ways God reveals God's self to us!

What is our (human) response? We want more gods, other gods, because we cannot wait for Moses. We complain: why did Moses bring us out here? We were better off in slavery ... we despise this food....

Our all-knowing God already sees what we have done and what we are doing – and knows what we need:

We need more God.

We do NOT need more “little g” gods of our own making: honor, wealth, prestige, appearances ...

We need more God, the one God who brought God's people out of slavery and into new life. We who enslave ourselves with things ... need only God.

St. Augustine wrote: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

There is good news for our restless hearts.

First of all, Moses did a powerful thing: he bargained with God, argued with God – and won. God said to Moses: “*your* people have acted perversely.” Moses implored the Lord to remember *the Lord's own* people, the ones to whom God had made a promise. God *changed his mind* because God keeps God's promises. Moses artfully turned the exchange from an emphasis on the people's sins to God's role to save God's people. The Israelites would continue to the Promised Land.

Our restless hearts of course find good news in the New Testament, as well. We remember that gospel means “good news,” and that THE Good News is Jesus the Christ. THE good news is what we proclaim in a Eucharistic prayer: say it with me:

Christ has died;  
Christ is risen;  
Christ will come again.

In the meantime, here we are. Here we are, created by God to know, love, and serve God, and to live forever with God in eternal life.

Who is this God?

This is God who will leave 99 sheep to fend for themselves in order to find the one that has wandered away, the one who is lost. We might sometimes be that one, waiting to hear our Lord’s voice, the footsteps, and to feel God’s strong embrace.

There’s a widow who turns her house upside down to find a coin. That would be like tearing up your whole room to find – a penny. Of all the things that the widow had to worry about, she spent her time looking for one small coin. Have you ever search high and low for one small toy – or a sock – or a button that fell off of your favorite sweater? Me, too.

This is God who creates light in dark places,  
who sweeps out her home to find what others call insignificant.

Nothing in God’s creation is insignificant: not one sheep, not one coin, not one button.

When something or someone is lost and then found, we celebrate!

What a beautiful pattern:   lost           found           rejoice/celebrate

I wonder, then, if the Israelites’ wandering and the shepherd seeking and the widow rejoicing are not about being lost. Perhaps they are about being FOUND. When we take that leap of faith to do what Jesus asks, we must know that God will never leave us lost and alone. Discipleship can be hard. Sometimes we find ourselves in scary places, places of shadow and darkness, places we feel lost and alone. The good news is that God loves us SO much that God will break ALL of the rules to find us. You see, the rules of humankind are not broad enough, encompassing enough, to hold God’s love. Jesus wants us to know that the grace,

the love, of God is huge and radical – it is has no bounds. God's grace is with us however far we wander, in whatever dark corner we land in, and wherever we stray.

No matter how many other sheep there are, how many other treasures, you are the most precious one. You are the most precious one. You are worthy of Jesus' radical, rule breaking love. So am I. God rejoices in finding us. REJOICES! Rejoice, friends, in being found. Rejoice with friends and neighbors and all of the angels that you, indeed, the most precious sinner, have been found.