

CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation



September 12, 2010

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

Gospel reading

Luke 15:1-32 [*To be read aloud*]

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So to them he addressed this parable. “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.’ In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”.... (*Today’s reading ends in verse 32*).

Brief commentary:

In this chapter, Jesus is criticized by the religious leaders for his association with sinners and tax collectors. This opposition sets the stage for the three parables known as the parables of mercy. These parables are bound together by the joy of finding that which was lost, in this case, sinners and outcasts. Jesus begins by pointing out that God’s way of acting is not like ours, which is why he says: “What man among you...” By means of these three stories, Jesus reveals the immeasurable compassion and love of God which is not like anything we have ever experienced. The third parable is probably the most famous for its message and its beauty. The story is really about a father whose love for his two sons is extravagant, prodigal. After calamity forces the younger son to return home, he is welcomed by his father with open arms filled with the joy of having recovered him. This familiar first part of the story continues with a second event, the anger of the older son. The father also goes out to this son who refuses to enter the house. He affirms the young man’s faithfulness, but invites him to join in the joy of the brother who was lost and has been found. In these three parables, the joy of the shepherd, the woman and the father has nothing to do with whether it is just and fair that what was lost is found. What matters to Luke is the joy that arises upon finding what was lost.

Today’s reading offers three significant messages:

- The scribes and Pharisees excluded sinners. Jesus included them.
- God lovingly “squanders” forgiveness and mercy on us. God is always waiting for our return home.
- The older son is reminded that all that the father has is his. Nothing has been taken away from him by welcoming his brother back.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. Is it hard for me to accept that God is good even with sinful people? Explain.
2. Have I ever needed to be found and forgiven? Give concrete examples.

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 218-221; 545; 589; 1468; 2839.