

Third Sunday after Trinity

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 July 2025

Preacher: Fr. Randall Russell

[0 : 00] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Having just celebrated the 4th of July, I've been thinking an awful lot about America, and a lot about how we as Americans often see everything through the lens of our distinct American culture and values.

For example, instead of understanding salvation in terms of being baptized and born again into a kingdom with a king, that is, an unelected ruler as its head, a lot of American Christians instead understand salvation in terms of making a personal choice for Jesus, which really isn't all that different than telling people to vote for Jesus as Lord.

For many American Christians are often more familiar with their individual rights as Americans than they are the creeds and teachings of Christ's Holy Church.

And so, whenever we as Americans read things like this morning's parable of the lost sheep, we typically understand it in a very, very individualistic way.

Because as Americans, we often value our independence, our personal freedom, and our individuality much more than anything else.

[1 : 35] Which is why I believe we so often see ourselves as that one lost sheep in this morning's gospel. Because as Americans, we like for things to be about individuals.

As in this morning's parable of the lost sheep is all about how God loves you, that one lost sheep, to the exclusion of everyone else, the 99 other sheep who are left alone in the wilderness.

But is that actually true? In other words, is this morning's parable of the lost sheep really all about how the good shepherd loves you, to the exclusion of everyone else?

Well, even though God does love you, I can tell you that the parable of the lost sheep is not about how God loves you, to the exclusion of everyone else.

Because what does the good shepherd do just as soon as he finds that one lost sheep? He lays it on his shoulders rejoicing.

[2 : 56] And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. And likewise, what does the woman in the parable of the ten silver coins do, just as soon as she finds that one lost coin?

Again, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found that piece which I lost. And consequently, even in the parable of the prodigal son, which immediately follows after the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin, what does the prodigal son's father do?

Just as soon as he finds his lost son, he has a fatted calf killed, throws a party, and invites his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him because his son was lost, but now he is found.

And isn't it kind of strange how all three of these parables end in pretty much the same way?

For all three of these parables end with the lost being found and then, then, welcomed back and incorporated into a larger community.

[4 : 28] For this parable simply is not just about you and Jesus and forget the rest of the world. As the Anglican priest and English poet John Donne once said, No man is an island unto himself.

Because we were all created to be in union, to be in communion with both God as well as one another. And Christ, one holy Catholic and apostolic church, is the place where all of that happens. Where that which is lost is found. And where all the friends and neighbors of the good shepherd rejoice together and even just one sinner who repents and is returned home.

for the parable of the lost sheep really isn't about you and it isn't about me. Because this morning's parable really isn't about the individual per se as it is about community, as it is about fellowship, as it is about rejoicing together as the people of God.

For in the end, the parable of the lost sheep is about Christ and his holy church.

[6 : 03] Because God's love does not flourish in isolation. It flourishes when that which was lost is found and then returned to its rightful place amidst the family of God.

So repent and rejoice. Repent because the gospel is not about you. So don't make it about you. Don't make it about your personal testimony, your life experience, or your special relationship with God. Instead, put away all foolish pride and false humility and rejoice.

Rejoice because even though the gospel is not about you, the gospel is still for you just as it is for all.

For the scribes and Pharisees clearly thought that the religious life was all about them and how much God loved them to the exclusion of everyone else.

[7 : 18] But today, Jesus shows both them as well as all of us that true religion is about living and rejoicing together in the good shepherd's love, especially when that love is shown to those whom we might consider least in the kingdom of God.

For there is more joy in heaven over just one sinner who repents than over 99 just persons who need no repentance. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.