



Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

Psalms 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-32 or 15:1-10

Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 11, 2022

LECTONARY #132C
Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14
Psalms 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19
1 Timothy 1:12-17
Luke 15:1-32 or 15:1-10



REFLECTION

The Pharisees and scribes were outraged by the company Jesus attracted and complained that he ate with tax collectors and sinners. As Christ's reputation grew, his preference for the company of sinners must have seemed like an insult to the Pharisees who were accustomed to being praised for their righteousness.

Jesus responds to this outrage by telling the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. The shepherd with one hundred sheep and the woman with ten coins both diligently search for and rejoice over the one that is lost, just as God seeks after lost souls. But the last story tells us something about ourselves. The prodigal son is afraid his sins have made him unlovable; the older son is afraid all his good works are not enough to earn love. How often we forget that the Father's love cannot be lost or earned! He blesses us when we are faithful and he rejoices over us when we return to him.



ACTION

Like the Pharisees, we often look at people in a very black-and-white way—righteous or sinner, good or bad—and it makes it difficult to hear Christ's message clearly. When we draw lines between people, we lose sight of the battle between good and evil within our own hearts.

Who are the "sinners" and the "righteous" in your life? Where do you draw the lines between people? This week, look for opportunities to talk to people you normally overlook and ask Christ for the grace to see yourself and others more clearly.



The Spitfire Grill

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Which character in the parable of the prodigal son do you relate to most? Why is that?
- ❖ Can you think of a relationship in your own life that demonstrates unconditional love?



September 11, 2022

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #132C

Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14

Psalms 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-32 or 15:1-10

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In today's Gospel Jesus gathers a mixed crowd of sinners and Pharisees and tells them several parables. The first tells of a shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to find the one lost sheep. The second tells of a woman who only has ten coins and loses one. She persistently searches until her coin is found. The parable of the prodigal son is included in the long form of the Gospel reading. These parables reveal the tender mercy of God and his relentless pursuit of the one who is lost. For the Pharisee, this is a scandal, but for the sinner, this is a balm. The first two parables remind us that for the person who is lost, God does not wait until they return. God is proactive in seeking us out. This important message for teens is timeless. We are never far from God's great love for us. In fact, he is already seeking us and bringing us home to him.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus is searching for you.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week the Church celebrates the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14). This feast celebrates the finding of the true cross by St. Helena, the mother of Constantine. This feast provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the true cross, the one used to crucify Jesus, but that we also see as the triumphant sign of victory. The cross is a major symbol for

Catholic Christians. The mystery of the cross, much like the lives of the saints, allows us to reflect on the mystery of suffering and glory, present in our lives.

Church Teaching Connection

"Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy. Christ, who told us to forgive one another 'seventy times seven' (Mt 18:22) has given us his example: he has forgiven us seventy times seven. Time and time again he bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love. With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 3).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 15:1-10

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

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."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

► Think about the social groups you see at school, or even your own group of friends. Are all of the people in each group the same? Are there people with different opinions or ways of life in a group?

Throughout his ministry, Jesus gathered different kinds of people together. We can just imagine the size of the crowds following Jesus to hear what he has to say. Everyone, faithful religious people, people with questionable morals, and people who are in need of real help, would want to hear what he was saying. Those faithful religious people did not like the fact that they were in the same position as the sinners, whom they looked down upon. In response, Jesus tells everyone gathered these amazing parables about the way God values each person. Parables are stories that help the listeners understand Jesus'

teachings better by relating them to situations the listeners are familiar with.

First, he tells them of a shepherd who has one hundred sheep. After losing one sheep, the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to go after the one lost sheep. The shepherd carries the sheep back on his shoulders and rejoices that what was lost is now found. He then tells a similar story of a woman who loses a coin, and frantically searches for it. When she finds it, she invites all her friends to celebrate her finding what was lost.

He asks the question: who among you wouldn't act like this? As if these are normal reactions to lost things. If you were to answer that the shepherd and the woman were acting foolishly, you may have a practical and sensible mind, but you definitely are not God. So let us try to see with the eyes of God.

► Have you ever spent a lot of time and effort searching for something that was very valuable to you that you lost? If not, what might be something so valuable that you would go through that effort? Would that item's value be seen by others or is it only meaningful to you?

The world teaches us to live in a practical way. It is common for us to think that the best possible good is one that benefits the most amount of people. If the majority of the people are mostly comfortable, then things are okay. But this is not God's way.

God does not see the crowd, God sees the individual. Think of when Jesus calls his disciples. He does not go to a large crowd and ask if anyone wants to follow him. He goes to Andrew and Simon, calls them by name, and asks them to follow. He does not see the crowd, he sees the individual. He does not see the world, he sees you. And not just you, but every single person.

This does not mean that Jesus is oblivious to crowds. People surround him wherever he goes. He has compassion for those individuals who make up the crowd. When Jesus ministers, he seeks the person. So when a person is lost, he is going to look for them, and he will not give up until they are with him again. Each person is valuable to the Lord. Each person is known and loved. He is seeking you.

To the world, this is a radical and impractical kind of love. It is reckless and fearless and knows no bounds. When others may have seemed to give up,

Jesus has not. He is relentless. Because you are worth it.

► **Do you have relationships in your life that you will never give up on? What are examples of those relationships?**

We hopefully see glimpses of this love in the relationships that fill our lives. Hopefully we catch a vision of this with our friends. We might see it imperfectly in our parents or loved ones. But truthfully, no one can always love like this. Only Jesus can. He loves you like this.

Some people will think this love impossible. Some people may say that ninety-nine is good enough. But Jesus always sees the individual. Jesus sees you. He loves you so much he gives himself to you in the sacraments. He gives himself, Body, Blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist. He calls the Church to himself and is made manifest through this imperfect body. This is the love of Jesus. It is real. It is here. It is for you. And, it is for you to share with others through your own actions.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 22.

Jesus shows a radical love, one that would leave the ninety-nine to find the one lost sheep.

God does not see the crowd, but the individual, and calls them by name.

We are challenged today to accept this love of Jesus and mirror it to our communities.

Act on the Word

Hide and Sheep

For this activity, you will need a large area with many hiding places for a modified game of hide and seek.

This activity plays like a reverse game of hide and seek. The goal of the game is to not be the last shepherd to find the sheep!

One player is selected as the sheep. They will be given a set amount of time to hide. Depending on your space, give them around one minute. Everyone else are shepherds, seeking the lost (hiding) sheep.

When a shepherd finds the sheep, that person must join the sheep and hide with them. Every person who finds the sheep must stay and hide with the sheep. The last shepherd to find the sheep is the sheep in the next round.

After a few rounds of play, break the young people into small groups and have them reflect on how it felt to seek the lost sheep and then remain with them. How did it feel to be the original sheep? How did the shepherds feel being in solidarity with the lost sheep when they stayed with that person? Finish the discussion by having the young people brainstorm concrete ideas for seeking and being in solidarity with those they encounter in their daily activities (at school, home, work, and so on) who are lost or marginalized.

Closing Prayer

*Ever-faithful God,
your mercy is beyond our ability
to comprehend.*

*Shape our hearts and our lives according
to the pattern of Jesus.*

*Help us to forgive as we are forgiven and to
love as we are loved.*

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.