

Lectionary C September 11, 2016 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost  
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church, Evansville, IN  
Pastor Roberta Meyer

Exodus 32:7-14  
Psalm 51:1-10  
1 Timothy 1:12-17  
Luke 15:1-10

*1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. 2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3 So he told them this parable: 4 "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. 8 "Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

### **Where Is Jesus?**

Last week Gina Moore posted a You Tube video on Facebook. It was Alan Jackson singing a song about September 11, 2001. The title of this song is "Where Were You When The World Stopped Turning?" The thing was I had been working on this sermon when I got her post and I had just written this question while thinking about the Gospel, "Where is Jesus on this 9/11/16?"

I could have changed it to include "and where is Jesus when the world stops turning?"

If we pay attention to the Gospel for today, we will see the answer very clearly. At the beginning of the lesson Jesus is surrounded by what the New Revised Standard Version says are *tax collectors and sinners*. The Message Bible says it this way. "...a lot of men and women of doubtful reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently." It was so obvious that most of the people in the crowd were questionable that we read, "*The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends."* It goes on to say this. "*Their grumbling triggered this story.*"

That's when Jesus begins the main narrative of this chapter in Luke which is nicknamed the "Chapter of the Lost". There is a lost sheep and a lost coin. However, when we read these stories, we see that they aren't really about what is lost. The real focus is on *a shepherd who risks everything to go look, and about a woman who sweeps all night long to find. These stories are about a God who will always go looking for God's lost children.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lose, David 2016

And, as one commentator points out, the heroes of these stories, the shepherd and the woman, are just ordinary people looking for what is lost. The commentator explains, “...when you think how ordinary were the persons representing God – a shepherd who stands at the very bottom of the socio-economic ladder in first-century Palestine, a woman with only ten silver coins to her name – you realize that maybe these aren’t just metaphors, but rather that they are reminders that God often works through ordinary people to do the extraordinary work of helping to find someone.”<sup>2</sup>

So, let’s get back to our questions. On this fifteenth anniversary of the attack on our country by terrorists, “Where is Jesus?” The scripture from Luke nails it. Jesus always is with sinners and those who are lost. Jesus is with those who need to be found. Jesus is always on the cliffs rescuing lambs. Jesus is always persistently sweeping until every last valuable treasure of a child of God is safely in God’s arms. On that day fifteen years ago Jesus was with each and every person in those twin towers and in the pentagon and on flights 11, 77, 175 and flight 93, when it crashed in Pennsylvania. I can assure you that Jesus was with all involved, hijackers, included.

And this scripture reminds us that Jesus was with the ordinary people that day who became heroes because they felt the need to help. There were hundreds of them. We’ve heard stories about many of them, like the story of Welles Crowther. Welles *went to work like every other day to his job as an equities trader in the World Trade Center. After the second tower was hit, the one he was in, Welles led everyone he could find down the steps to safety, and then he went back for more. And after leading more people to safety, he went back again, and again, and again, until the tower collapsed. On that day, this talented, athletic, good natured, but in so many ways ordinary person did an extraordinary thing, giving his life to make sure others could live. On that day, God used Welles Crowther to find people who were lost.*<sup>3</sup>

Thank God, we don’t all find ourselves in situations like on that day 15 years ago. But remember, God uses us, in our everyday, ordinary lives, to find others. Where is Jesus on this September 11, 2016? Jesus is here with all of us, in our lost places and in our ordinary lives calling us to be Jesus’ hands and feet, his smile, his voice of justice wherever we are in our ordinary lives.

And do you know what happens? Each time the lost are found there is a celebration. In Jesus’ stories both the shepherd and the woman called those around them together and said, “*Celebrate with me!*” Jesus promises a party every time the lost are found. He said, “*Count on it—that’s the kind of party God’s angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God.*”

So today as we remember a day of great loss for our nation, let’s also remember with joy that Jesus is with us and using us to bring God’s Love to the world. As you listen to Alan Jackson’s song, please remember in all those places we were that day and all the emotions from shock to compassion to fear and anger. Where Jesus was that day and where is Jesus today? Jesus is right here, carrying us home. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPHnadJ-0hE>

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<sup>2</sup> Lose, David

<sup>3</sup> Lose, David