# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“The Lost Coin”**

**Luke 15:8-10**

 **September 11, 2022**

Do you remember a time when you lost something of real importance to you? Your car keys, your phone, your wallet containing not only cash but credit cards, your child in a mall or at an amusement park? Losing something of importance is an experience that all of us share, and Jesus told stories about everyday events in order to teach spiritual truths – we call them parables – and this morning’s parable is about the loss of a treasured coin.

What is God’s response to those who are lost, whose hearts are far from him? In a series of parables in Luke chapter fifteen, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that God seeks out every lost heart and rejoices greatly when even one of those hearts turn to him. We looked at the first of the parables last week in Luke 15:1-7 where Jesus tells the story of a shepherd who discovers that one of his herd of one hundred sheep has gone missing. Leaving the other ninety-nine, he goes looking for the lost sheep, finds it, puts it on his shoulders, and brings it safely back to his sheep-fold. He calls his friends and neighbors together to rejoice with him because his lost sheep is found. In verse seven, Jesus explains the meaning of his parable: “In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!” In order to drive this point home, Jesus tells a second parable. I invite you to turn with me to Luke 15:8-10

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won’t she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels when even one sinner repents.”

Well, some may say, what’s the big deal about a lost coin? The Greek text says the silver coin was a *drachma* which was a day’s wage for a day-laborer. Not an insignificant amount of money, but not earth-shaking either. But, by the woman having ten coins and losing one, Jesus is saying something very important about the lost coin, something his first century audience would readily have understood. When a woman married she took ten coins of the highest value she possessed and sewed them into a headdress which she wore on her wedding day. These ten coins were of tremendous significance to her as a woman, and the headdress was of such importance that, by law, it could not be taken from her – not even to pay a debt. It would be like a woman losing a precious stone from her wedding ring – she will turn her house upside-down looking for it.

If you came by my office here at the church, you would see pictures of our three sons and their families. These pictures are worth only a few dollars in terms of their material value, but to Lauri and me they are priceless because they are pictures of people we love. Because God loves you and me, we are priceless to him, and he was willing to do anything to find us and bring us home, including sending his Son to die on a cross for our sin, so that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.

The efforts of the woman to find her lost coin includes lighting a lamp and sweeping her floor. Her flurry of activity pictures God at work to find and bring back the lost. The lamp illuminates the darkened corners where the coin may have fallen. I’m sure we can all see the symbolism. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” and the light of Christ needs to be brought to those who are living in darkness.

What, then, does the sweeping of the floor symbolize? In those days it was customary to spread straw on the hard-packed, earthen floor. A coin falling down in it would naturally be difficult to see, so the woman needs to sweep it away in order for the light to illuminate the coin. The straw symbolizes the false teaching of the Pharisees which, as we discovered last week, was to proclaim that God wants nothing to do with lost sinners. Indeed, they say, God rejoices when a sinner perishes. In order for the light of Christ to shine for the lost, we need to sweep away the false teaching and the condescension that begets it, and begin treating the lost as God treats them – people who are priceless to God.

Jesus not only said, “I am the light of the world.” He also said to his followers, “You are the light of the world.” I close with four practical steps each one of us can take to be his light to the lost. First, pray at the beginning of each day that God will give you an opportunity to share his love with someone who is lost. Second, live each moment of that day as Christ would live if he were you. Third, engage in conversation those who respond to what you are sharing and living. Fourth, close the day by praying for those for whom you were able to shine the light of Christ. The lost are loved by God – let us join God in his work of seeking them that they may be found; that they may be saved.