



Homily for  
THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
10/11 September, 2016

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**Fr. Dwayne's homily follows....**

24<sup>th</sup> Sunday – C – 2016  
September 11, 2016  
Holy Spirit (HG)

Ex 32:7-11, 13-14  
I Tim 1:12-17  
Lk 15:1-32

*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.  
Of these I am the foremost. But for that reason I was mercifully treated,  
so that in me, as the foremost,  
Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for those who would come  
to believe in him for everlasting life.*

I. How do you feel when you find something that has been lost?

Each of us has lost something during our lifetimes – it may have been something small and inconsequential or something very important – like our car keys, house key, family heirlooms, large sums of money.

Whether important, or relatively unimportant, we are happy when we find what had been lost. Not only are we happy, but we can even say we are *joyful* and at peace.

But don't you think the joy in the gospel is a little bit over the top? Doesn't it contrast with our sense of joy?

- the shepherd finds his lost sheep – one out of a hundred - and then calls his friends and neighbors and invites them to rejoice with him because he has found his sheep
- the woman loses a single coin and then when she finds it calls in her friends and neighbors and asks them to rejoice with her. When was the last time you found a lost coin and then contacted your friends to tell them all about it?!

- and the father in the third parable *really* goes overboard. His son, who has turned away from his father, has squandered his inheritance, has sinned grievously, returns home and the father throws a big party for him! He doesn't even get scolded. That's too much!

II. What this “over the top” joy – in each of these parables - is telling us is that this is how much God loves us and never wants us to get lost from him. As Jesus says in the gospel, “There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.”

**God wants us to know his mercy.**

Have you ever thought that our sin is, in itself, an invitation to know God's mercy? Naturally, we think of sin as a bad deal – certainly something we should not do. Sin makes us feel bad and we feel how sin separates us from each other and from God. And yet, the experience of sinning, is an invitation to repent and know God's forgiveness.

**God is desperate to forgive us.**

- look at the energy the shepherd spent in looking for his lost sheep. He left the ninety-nine in the desert and went to look for the one lost.
- the woman “searched diligently,” lighting a lamp, sweeping the house to look for a single coin
- and we can well imagine the father, mourning the loss of his son, sitting on the porch – day in and day out – looking down the road, waiting, hoping for his son to come home. Look at how the father *raced* to the son, embraced him and kissed him.

While sin separates us from God, it does not mean forgiveness is more difficult to find. The worse our sin is, the more we should want to return to God and open our heart to God's love and forgiveness. We are like the prodigal son – finally getting up the courage to turn around – rehearsing our story – willing to settle for the bare minimum – when in reality God wants to shower us with his love beyond measure.

III. Our sin is an invitation to repent and know God's forgiveness.

- is our sin the kind of sin demonstrated by the younger son? Do we make a series of immoral choices? Do we make sinful choices which harm ourselves and others? Does our sin take us away from relationships with others – our family, our friends, and from God?
- or is our sin more like the older son who stayed home. He stayed home and was faithful to his responsibilities. Even though on the outside he looked good, he was harboring

resentment, anger and self-righteousness. In his own way he was waiting for *his* share of the inheritance. He didn't really have a good relationship with his father – he was just hanging around, looking forward to the day when the old man would die and he would get it all.

- *is our sin more in our actions – or in our heart?*

**In either case – God only wants to forgive us.**

IV. The gospel parable leaves us hanging. It doesn't tell us what the older son does.

Does he “come to his senses” like his brother and join in the party? Does he build his relationship with his father?

In a certain sense, *we* are the rest of the story. It will be three years before we hear these parables again at a Sunday Mass. Will we wait three years before we reflect upon God's desire to share his mercy with us? Can we afford to wait that long? Or will we begin to live it now?