

Gospel lesson

Let us hear about holy joy for every child of God.



picture reversed from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/jvh-parables/>;
credit: Jan van 't Hoff/
Gospelimages.com

Luke 15:1-10

(NRSV)

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."

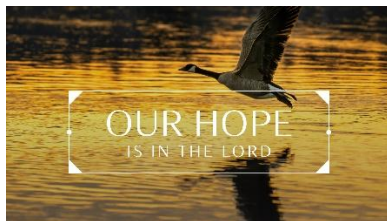
The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's time>

<Hymn "Amazing Grace">

UMH #378>

Message: Our Hope Is in the Lord



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/i-will-call-upon-the-lord/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Great Lord of hope even when all seems hopeless,
as we take time now to further consider today's
scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That by trusting in You more fully in all we do, we
share Your grace more fully through our lives. Amen.

We continue with "~~I Will~~ Call[ing] Upon the Lord"

today because “Our Hope Is in the Lord:”

“We find and keep hope when we name all that is hard in our world, take a breath, and then remember, ‘but God.’”



background picture from
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cf/A_Large_blank_world_map_with_oceans_marked_in_blue.PNG

What has scared you in the news lately? Why?

<Let them respond>

What have you done about it? <Let them respond>

What stands out to you as the best response to it that you have seen? Why? <Let them respond>

What do you think Jesus calls us to do in response to it? Why? <Let them respond>

Do you see God’s love in action in the aftermath of that news? <Let them respond>

How can we help our community to recognize God’s grace in action in the aftermath of that news? <Let them respond>

In Jeremiah, the community did not seem to recognize the Lord’s presence with them; He said, “they do not know me.” In the psalm also, the people “have all gone astray.” Do you recall what it is that they did? <Let them respond>

In Jeremiah we heard, “They are skilled in doing evil, but do not know how to do good.” The psalmist complained, “They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none that does good.”

When we hear the news today, it seems like little has changed: shootings and war, corruption, pollution, spread of disease, areas of starvation. If anything, it seems worse because by now we should know better.

I find myself asking similar things to what the psalmist said, “Have they no knowledge, the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon the Lord?” How can people treat one another so badly? Do they not understand the hurt they cause?

People who put their trust in man-made institutions inevitably come to a point where the human rules and wisdom conflicts with what God tells us to do.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/bs-chambers-court-women/>;
credit: Jeremy Park, Bible-Scenes.com

The Judaic worship of YHWH in Jerusalem was barely tolerated by their Roman rulers. The temple was central to the Judaic identity, the seat of God in their midst. The priests had to work with, not challenge, government corruption lest Romans raze their building and they lose the temple again.

Then a charismatic Jew started causing them problems, and the populace was getting loud in support of Him, so to protect their faith, the priests had Jesus crucified. Then people started talking about Him as

the risen Messiah, a rallying cry for radically different living, one that proclaimed a king other than Caesar. This was dangerous under Roman rule!

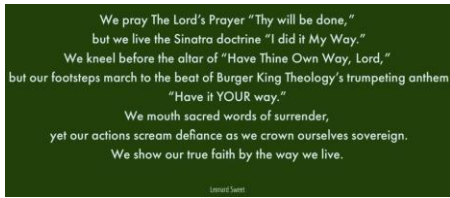


picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/yo-paul-conversion/>;
credit: John Paul Stanley / YoPlace.com

The priestly authorities could not tolerate this threat. A young scholar at the temple, Saul, was particularly passionate about protecting worship of YHWH and the purity of their faith. After witnessing the stoning of Stephen, Saul was sanctioned to use violence against those he saw as blasphemers.

Saul thought he was doing what was right and just in the Lord's eyes when in truth he was committing heinous, sinful acts.

- † We have people doing that today, thinking they are doing the right thing in rounding up people of color and incarcerating them.
- † We have people doing that today, anyone who insists another should be beaten or killed for living or believing differently than they do.
- † We have people doing that today, putting the right to own guns above the safety of children in school, let alone the citizenry at large.
- † We are guilty of it on a lesser scale ourselves, every time we judge someone as less righteous than ourselves because of one circumstance.



picture posted on Facebook
by Clergy Coaching Network;
[https://www.facebook.com/photo/
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set=a.547725677387076](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1187923556700615&set=a.547725677387076)

We get off track from what Jesus taught. As Leonard Sweet put it:

We pray the Lord's Prayer "Thy will be done,"
but we live the Sinatra doctrine "I did it My Way."

We kneel before the altar of "Have Thine Own Way,
Lord," but our footsteps march to the beat of
Burger King Theology's trumpeting anthem "Have it
YOUR way."

We mouth words of surrender, yet our actions scream
defiance as we crown ourselves sovereign.
We show our true faith by the way we live.

Probably many in the fledgling church hated Saul and wanted him dead because of his cruelty. Yet God knew his heart and his circumstances. Did Jesus hate Saul?

I think Jesus hated the sinful acts and saw them as symptoms of the disease of Sin. The Healer sought to heal Saul. As Paul wrote of himself,

"he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus."

Here's the amazing thing for us today: God loves each of us just as much. Jesus told us that in the parables we heard today - there is rejoicing when any

of us turn from our sin and back to the Lord.



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/i-will-call-upon-the-lord/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/fourteenth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-graphics>

Jesus gives us a way forward out of our mistakes. What is more, the same holds true for every person in this world. We are not called to judge other people as evil or hopeless, but to help them see a way forward in the love of Christ.

There was a political assassination this week. Should someone spewing hate be assassinated? Should the murderer be killed too? It is so human to lash out, to seek revenge, to meet evil with evil!

Jesus NEVER called for violence, let alone another person's death. Rather, we are to seek healing, to strive to eliminate the sin, and to live in love. This is only made possible through God's grace.

Our hope is that all learn to live in that grace. In hope, we learn to forgive, to seek understanding for ourselves and for others, and to move forward in love – that our community, our country, and our world may become whole again in the Lord's grace, filled with *shalom* through the power of the Holy Spirit.