It is always an interesting question to ask when reading or listening to scripture, who am I in this passage; and, therefore, what does it mean to me? For example we can all ask ourselves of this passage from Luke's gospel, am I a grumbling pharisee? Am I an outcast and sinner? Am I a lost sheep? Am I a shepherd? Am I a valuable coin? Am I a woman who lost a coin? The curious thing about such questions, is that they often have the same answer: yes, I am. In differing circumstances and states of mind and soul, I am sometimes one and sometimes another and sometimes yet another. I will say more about our variable identities later.

The context of our passage is Jesus' intense teaching mostly through parables in the days leading up to Palm Sunday when he will enter Jerusalem in triumph only to be crucified 5 days later. His message was consistently one of healing and inclusion. You will recall that last week we read of the woman who suffered from an 18-year long debilitating condition that left her hunched over, face towards the ground. Without her asking, Jesus saw her and healed her not only from her condition but from the social calumny that such a condition would provoke from those seemingly whole.

Today we have two parables about things that are lost – a sheep and a coin. The sheep is one of 100; the coin is one of ten. Clearly neither the shepherd nor the woman would be destroyed at a one percent loss in the case of the shepherd or even a ten percent loss in the case of the woman. But as Jesus concludes in the parable of the lost sheep, *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.

Right after our passage from Luke this evening, the parable of the prodigal son appears. I don't think I need rehearse the story for you. Perhaps you remember when the prodigal returns in rags having spent all his inheritance, his older brother is deeply resentful of the welcome and the fuss the father is taking over this reprobate. *Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'* Do we welcome the unfortunate even if his or her misfortune is his or her own fault, or do we condemn him or her – an important question. I think it pretty clear what Jesus would do.

In all Jesus' encounters with the Pharisees and the priests, they would seek to exclude for any number of reasons and would show no concern for the excluded or the lost. Our Lord has the absolute opposite point of view.

How much concern does our society show for the excluded and the lost? I think we must agree that the answer is not very much. For centuries we have been only too happy to exclude the poor, the afflicted, the stranger. Think of the downtown east side of Vancouver. Those of us who know the city know how to avoid Hastings Street between Cambie and Clark in order to spare ourselves the horror of what one sees if one makes the mistake of driving through the neighbourhood on Hastings. I confess when I am in Victoria, given a choice of driving from the Oak Bay

Junction to the Johnson Street Bridge, I will always take Yates rather than the more direct and convenient Pandora. One can feel rather comfortable as long as the excluded and the lost are contained and out of sight. But, clearly Hastings and Pandora are the very routes Jesus would have taken.

We don't mind the excluded and the lost when they can be useful. I might well choose to recruit someone who is clearly down on their luck if I have a difficult and dirty task needing done in the yard, but I don't want that worker in the house.

On this Remembrance Day we would do well to remember the Indigenous and Chinese Canadians who were "good" enough to serve in our armed forces through two world wars. They weren't good enough to vote or be considered full citizens. The indigenous volunteers would have needed the written permission of the white Indian Agent to leave the reserve to enlist.

The second or third generation of Chinese Canadians, the descendants of those who built the railways, were deprived of the right to vote in British Columbia in 1872 and the federal right to vote in 1885. In 1922 the Federal Government passed a law that any person denied the vote provincially because of their race could not vote federally. Chinese Canadians only recovered citizenship and the vote in 1947. 600 Chinese Canadians served in World War Two. Good enough to die for King and Country – not good enough to be a citizen.

Only in 1960 did Indigenous People in Canada get the right to vote. Before that the only way an indigenous person could vote

was to apply for enfranchisement which gave them the right to vote but robbed them of their status as first nations people. In World War One, more than 4000 indigenous men enlisted fully 1/3 the indigenous men aged between 18 and 45. In World War Two a similar number served. Notwithstanding that Canadian citizenship was established in 1947, it was not until 1956 that Indigenous Men were recognized as citizens. It was not until 1982 with the establishment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms were all distinctions among citizens removed and indigenous women were recognized as citizens. Again, good enough to die for King and Country, but not good enough for just about anything else.

44 years after the Charter of Rights and Freedoms our inclination to exclude and make lost is only partially checked. The increased use of the Notwithstanding Clause bodes ill for expanding inclusion and acceptance.

So on this Remembrance Day let us remember the excluded who were good enough to die but not to live as full members of our society. And let us resolve to end exclusion.

So let me come back to the questions that I suggested we might ask of ourselves. Can any of us say we have not been pharisaic at least on occasion? That's just not how its done. I don't see why I should change. People of alternate lifestyles are highly suspect. When only men are named, everyone knows that means men and women. Have we never said or thought one or more of these or other equally exclusionary thoughts.

But let us also ask, have we never been lost – either by actions of those who would exclude us or from our own insecurity in a climate of exclusion? Have we never worried about how will I fit in? Do we identify with those who are excluded and have compassion for them or are we just so relieved that we are included that we don't want to do anything to endanger that inclusion?

Five chapters before our passage this evening, the parable of the Good Samaritan appears. In this parable it is in fact the one who by definition was excluded because he was a Samaritan who provides the generous assistance to the much-injured traveller. The traveler, let us be clear, given that he was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho was more than likely Jewish. If he were, and had he not been so injured, he would have shunned the Samaritan.

So our passage this evening gives us lots of reason for prayerful self-examination. Can we be like Jesus and have inclusion as our instinctive response? Can we get over our impulse for division and rejection? I for one would never imagined even ten years ago the level of racism that is emerging in public discourse in Canada, leave alone in the United States and much of Europe. Are we like the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son, so insecure in our own inclusion that we are unable to welcome the excluded? Do we find our acceptance so shaky in family, society, and the Kingdom of God that we need to keep others out? What can you say about countries highly dependent on immigrant labour for their meanest tasks, rejecting immigration? It is not only exclusionary it is self-defeating.

What would Jesus do and say?

Amen