

## Notes for Next Sunday

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

### The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Ezekiel 34:11-24). The scattering of the sheep “on a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Ezek 34:12) would apply to the fall of Jerusalem in Ezekiel’s day (Ezek 33:21–22) and to its destruction in A.D. 70, as well as to all the persecutions inflicted on the church (cf. the scattering resulting from the persecution in Acts 8:1; 11:19), but the apocalyptic language especially points to the return of Christ, when his elect shall be gathered from all the earth (Mt 24:29–31). (CC). In verses 17-22 there is a strong warning to people of power and influence who were oppressing poorer Israelites. This prophetic word shows the same concern for social justice found elsewhere in the prophets. (CSB) The reference to David in verses 23-24 refers to David’s greater Son, Jesus who will unite all believers. The Gospel lesson gives and illustration of Jesus reaching out to all who are willing to hear His word and believe.

Epistle (1 Timothy 1:12-17). Paul knows who he was which comes out in verse 13 and therefore gives God all the credit for anything he is able to accomplish. Christ enabled Paul, particularly in the act of his call, to be an apostle. Paul’s own apostolic ministry is the clearest Gospel of divine mercy written into the life of undeserving mankind. His acting in ignorance did not make him guiltless, of course, but he had not placed himself outside the sphere of Jesus’ prayer from the cross (“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” – Luke 23:34) by deliberate rejection of the truth, as false teachers do.

Gospel (Luke 15:1-10). Luke 15 is a high point in the travel narrative and in the entire gospel. Called “The Gospel of the Outcast” and the “The Gospel for the Outcast,” Luke 15 “is so distinctive of the Lucan portrait of Jesus” as to be called “The Heart of the Third Gospel.” It is closely connected to the table talk and discourse on discipleship in Luke 14; Jesus is looking for those who have ears to hear his catechesis (14:35). The entirety of chapter 15 both is directed at the Pharisees and is also a fundamental part of the catechesis for the disciples and the crowds (and the tax collectors and sinners). The structure of the chapter is simple: an introduction (15:1–3) and three parables, one about a lost sheep (15:4–7), one about a lost coin (15:8–10), and one about a lost son (15:11–32). (CC p. 586) In this text the first two parables are covered.

*For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.*

OLD TESTAMENT – Ezekiel 34:11-24

<sup>11</sup>“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. <sup>12</sup>As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. <sup>13</sup>I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. <sup>14</sup>I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup>I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. <sup>16</sup>I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. <sup>17</sup>“As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. <sup>18</sup>Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? <sup>19</sup>Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet? <sup>20</sup>“Therefore

**this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup> Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your horns until you have driven them away, <sup>22</sup> I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another. <sup>23</sup> I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken.**

*34:11 I myself will search for my sheep.* In these verses, the tender, loving care for His miserable fallen creatures demonstrates that the God of the OT is not a wrathful ogre delighting in crushing helpless victims. He is the Father who sent His Son to seek and to save the lost. (TLSB)

*34:13 I will bring them out.* God promises that He will “bring them out from the nations.” The people of God had been deported to Babylon, where they would live in captivity for 70 years. God’s promise to restore them gives hope. ((Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

*34:13 own land.* Israel, land flowing with milk and honey, was given to them solely by God’s grace and according to His promises. Our “own land” is heaven, which God will give to us by His grace. We too are foreigners and exiles on earth, for our citizenship is in heaven (Heb 11:14-16). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 4)

*34:17-22* Not only did the shepherds abuse the flock, but members of the flock abused one another. There were stronger and fatter ones who oppressed and injured the weak and lean ones. God threatens to execute justice on those who prey on the weak. (TLSB)

*34:18 must you also muddy the rest with your feet.* Jewish leaders would not believe and also kept others from doing so.

#### EPISTLE –1Timothy 1:12-17

**<sup>12</sup> I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. <sup>13</sup> Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. <sup>14</sup> The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. <sup>16</sup> But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. <sup>17</sup> Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.**

*1:14 grace of our Lord was poured out.* Paul’s heart was changed by God’s overflowing grace. *grace.* God’s undeserved favor shown to the guilty sinner. Though he regarded himself as the foremost of sinners, the Lord’s grace for Paul was poured out in abundance. (TLSB)

*1:16 mercy for this reason.* In v 13b, Paul describes God’s mercy in terms of what God did for him; in v 16, that same mercy is described in terms of the example it set for others. (TLSB)

#### GOSPEL – Luke 15:1-10

**Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” <sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And**

**when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ <sup>7</sup> I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.**

*15:1 tax collectors and “sinners.”* (Taxes were collected for the Roman government by Jewish agents, who were especially detested for helping the pagan conqueror and for frequently defrauding their own people); Mk 2:15 (Sinners were notoriously evil people as well as those who either refused or lacked the time to follow the Mosaic law as interpreted by the teachers of the law. The term was commonly used to tax collectors, adulterers, robbers and the like). These were despised and cast out of the synagogues by the church leaders of their time.

*15:2 muttered.* It meant that they started a dirty rumor about Jesus. “He is bringing disgrace upon the whole business of Rabbinic work.” (Stuenkel)

*15:2 eats with them.* More than simple association, eating with a person indicated acceptance and recognition (cf. Ac 11:3; 1 Co 5:11; Gal 2:12). (CSB)

*15:3-7* The lost sheep represents the sinner, while God, especially the Son, is the shepherd (cf Ps 23; Is 40:11). The found sheep is every Christian, rescued and delivered by God. The neighbors are the saints and angels who rejoice together. (TLSB)

*15:4 in open country.* Their normal pasture. The emphasis is not on neglecting the flock, but on seeking the lost. (A shepherd typically watched 3-40 sheep, so Jesus’ account likely implies the presence of one or two helpers. (TLSB)

*15:5 puts on shoulders.* At that time the sheep’s feet were tied together in front of the shepherd’s neck. The bottom of the sheep was against the back of the shepherd’s neck. This was done because it was presumed that the sheep was exhausted and so the only way the sheep could get lost was if the shepherd got lost. (Stuenkel)

**<sup>8</sup>“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ <sup>10</sup> In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”**

*15:8-10* In the second parable, the repentant sinner is like a coin. Unlike the wandering sheep, the coin is inanimate, emphasizing its complete helplessness. (TLSB)

*15:8 ten silver coins.* Perhaps a collection of coins or bits of silver, worn as a headdress, brought into the marriage as the woman’s dowry and meant to sustain the family in times of want. The value of such a coin, a day’s wages, was once equivalent to the price of a sheep. (TLSB)

*15:8 search carefully.* Losing something in the house was not as simple as it sounds. House of that time had mud floor, some had grass or reeds on the floor. They had high and small windows for security’s sake. Frequently animals of some sort were also kept in the house. (Stuenkel)

*15:10 in presence of angels.* The community of joy that Jesus has in mind is the earthly and now heavenly community that exists through him and the coming of his kingdom. The joy is over a sinner who repents. (CC)