

Our Egos Make Us Prone To Wander Away from the Spirit-filled Body of the Lord We Love, But We Are Always Welcome to Come Home

"It is unlikely that anyone here this morning would embark on a purposeful separation from God and his people," Deacon Donald Hughes said in his sermon Sunday, "but, 'All of us do drift into sin from time to time—it is simply in our nature to do that.'"

God's merciful desire to welcome us back, he said, contrasts, to the complaints of the Pharisees and teachers of religious law, who thought Jesus to be in the wrong because he "associates with, eats with, and even parties with notorious sinners and tax collectors," in Deacon Hughes' words. "From their point of view, this behavior is inconsistent with their standards of purity and law-observance

"To help correct their understanding, Jesus tells three parables, two of which are in today's reading. First, Jesus tells the story of a shepherd who searches for one lost sheep even though he has 99 tucked safely away in the fold. Second, Jesus tells the story of a housewife who loses a valuable coin. Even though she has nine more, she cannot rest until she has found number 10. Both stories conclude with the celebration: the lost has been found! . . .

"The only thing special about the sheep and the coin is (that) they are lost. The lone

sheep may be perfectly content off in his own little meadow, and the coin really doesn't care," but "the wise and caring shepherd knows of the imminent danger for any sheep (that is) separated from both the shepherd and the communion of the fold. There is no question, without the shepherd's intervention, the sheep will most certainly encounter disaster and will be unable to fend for itself. As for the coin, you're right, the coin doesn't care, but the housewife does. Her house is not in order until the coin is found.

"These twin parables speak profoundly of the prevenient action of God on our behalf," Deacon Hughes said, but "to the Pharisees and teachers of religious law, these stories were probably an enigma." To "the tax collectors and sinners," however, "these stories were good news to a troubled soul."

Because it is in our nature to drift away, "we slowly construct for ourselves deities of our own design, and eventually find ourselves serving them. And our egos make all of us prone to wander away from the Spirit-filled body of the Lord we love. Today's good news is that we are always welcome to turn around and come home. It is simply in God's nature to take us back."



This woodcut illustration of the wicked and dishonest manager in Luke 16:1-13, which will be this Sunday's Gospel reading, was published in 1593 by Jermoe Nadal, SJ, in *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines* ("Illustrations of the Gospel Stories"), arranged according to the chronology of the life and ministry of Jesus. These woodcuts were republished in 1595 under the title *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia* ("Notes and Meditations on the Gospels"). Source: www.catholic-resources.org. This Sunday's Old Testament and Gospel lessons will speak of trustworthiness, faithfulness and loyalty. In the Epistle lesson, we are told to have "holy hands" and to be free from anger and controversy.

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Sundays
10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service
11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation
11:45 a.m.: Post-service discussion
6:00 p.m.: (First Sundays only) Choral Evensong

Thursdays: 6:30 p.m.: Evening Prayers. 7:00 p.m.: Singing & discussing hymns.

Readings, 9/23: Amos 8:4-12; Ps. 138; 1 Tim. 2:1-8; Luke 16:1-13. **9/30:** Amos 6:1-7; Ps. 146; 1 Tim. 6:11-19; Luke 16:19-31.

Prayer Emphases: Gambia; Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada; St. Peter and St. Paul Episcopal Church, Arlington, TX, and Fr. Thomas Hightower, Rector; Fuller Theological Seminary; parishioners on Northview Street.

For the poor: Ground beef, chicken, bacon, fresh produce, canned fruits and vegetables, milk, butter, cheese, cooking oil, pancake mix, syrup, dry cereal, chili powder, garlic powder, diapers, baby wipes, toilet paper, hand and bath soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors, shaving cream, men's and women's new underwear, gift cards or money to buy ice for dining facilities, cleaning supplies and bleach.

C. S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*: "(O)ne must train the habit of Faith. The first step is to recognize the fact that your moods change. The next is to make sure that, if you have once accepted Christianity, then some of its main doctrines shall be deliberately held before your mind for some time every day. That is why daily prayers and religious readings and churchgoing are necessary parts of the Christian life. We have to be continually reminded of what we believe."