

Trinity 3, 2017

“Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” (1 St. Peter 5.6-7)

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

In last week’s Gospel, we considered how the Lord has invited us to a great supper. We may think about this supper on many levels: for example, He invites us week by week to the Lord’s Supper – to the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood. We may also think about it in terms of the marriage supper of the Lamb – the gathering of all the Christian believers or saints in the Kingdom of Heaven. The point is, the Lord has extended an invitation for us to join with Him in fellowship. It is an offer to be fed by Him; to learn from Him; to enter into His life; and to receive the benefits of His love.

However, as we saw in last week’s Gospel, those who received the invitation excused themselves: one had just bought some property; one had just bought five yoke of oxen; and one had just been married. By the world’s standards all of these were good excuses; however, they are not so good if we understand them to be a rejection of God and His gracious invitation. What is more important: spending time in holy communion with the Lord -- the One Who shed His precious Blood for us on the Cross – or pursuing our own interests and advancements? Without a doubt, every invitation from Him deserves our undivided attention and our best effort.

In this morning’s Gospel Jesus tells the parable about the lost sheep and the lost coin. By doing so, He shows us our condition – our situation. We are that lost sheep that has wandered off. We are like that lost silver coin that has rolled off the table and lies in a dark corner. Our human nature is less than what God created it to be: it is fallen; it carries the infection of sin; on our own – without Christ – we are lost.

Of course many would strongly disagree. Pointing to our advancements in science and technology: our medical and engineering developments; our travel by air, by sea and by land, as well as our forays into outer space; the incredible revolution in the world of communication and data storage with computers and cell phones.

Indeed we could go on and on to speak of all kinds of human inventions which indicate progress.

But, unfortunately, we could equally talk about areas where there has not been progress – areas where we continue to struggle and even fail. For example, what about the terrible acts of violence carried out on innocent people in schools and malls and even hospitals? What about the addiction rates in our society, and the toll chemical dependence has taken on families? And, given that, why the legalization of marijuana for recreational purposes? Why is our culture so confused about sexuality? Why are little children physically and mentally abused? Why is there child pornography? Why are anxiety levels increasing in young children, and why are so many of these little ones committing suicide?

All of these are fair questions, and there are many more – the extreme weather events that are on the rise; the acceptance of abortion as a lifestyle choice; the greed and bullying and wars that continue in spite of every effort made for peace; the tragic reality of human trafficking; the pain and poverty on many levels of the indigenous peoples of Canada; and, the battered, weakened state of the traditional family unit.

Ultimately, our lostness is evidenced by the reality of death. Until Christ returns, death will come to us all. But what we must remember is that death was never part of God's creation. So every funeral home and every cemetery is a reminder of our mortality – that we are just people, and that we need to be saved.

In spite of all these troubling and perplexing issues, there is Hope – Hope with a capital 'H'. And that's the point: the Hope we need cannot and will not come from within us, because we are just people – mere mortals. Even with our technology and education and justice strategies, we need something more. We need Truth that is really true regardless of the situation or the time. We need a definition of what is good that holds for all peoples and cultures. We need a Love that is constant, strong; one that never wearies; one that is active, pure and forgiving.

Thankfully, this is exactly what today's Gospel is all about. Even though the shepherd has 99 of his sheep, he values the one that is lost and goes looking. Even though the woman has nine of her ten coins, she tears the house apart until she finds the tenth. Even though we are just people; infected with sin; guilty of failures in our thoughts, words and actions on a daily basis; often confused; weak

and susceptible to many excesses, devices and desires; and certain to meet our mortal end – even though all of that is true of us, the glorious News is that God still loves us. In fact, He loves us so much that He sent His only-begotten Son to confront our enemies of sin, death and hell – all the powers of darkness. Christ came, suffered and died as the full, perfect and sufficient Sacrifice for our sins. He was buried and descended into the territory of death; and the devil thought he had won the day because He had God's Son. But on the third day Jesus rose victorious from the grave; and He wants to share the new life of His victory with us.

He has come to dwell with us and in us by His Spirit. And in doing so, He brings the beauty and the order and the Peace of God the Holy Trinity to our humanity. Imagine that! The Holy and Eternal God – the Everlasting Father – has come to live in us! His is the Hope we need! His is the unchanging Truth; the strong and constant Love; and the perfect Good that has the power to transform lives. We do not have this Hope in ourselves because of our lostness, but God has graciously offered it to us through His Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

In celebrating Canada's 150th birthday this weekend, it is important that we, as members of Christ, understand how much our nation needs the Church. Canada needs the Church to lead by example. By demonstrating what forgiveness; through Christian marriage: raising children and modelling family life; by being a good neighbour; through good stewardship of land and property; by faithful and honest business practices; by caring for the elderly. By patience in line-ups; by the way we treat the waitress or waiter. All of these will be signs to the world of the new life; of what it is to be found and redeemed; of what it is to have a purpose that goes far beyond this material world.