

**24th Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 12, 2010**

Dear Parish Family,

In today's Gospel passage from Luke, Jesus is criticized by the Pharisees and scribes for preaching to sinners, and eating with them.

Like many religious people they saw such association as scandalous, and complain publicly to discredit Jesus.

Jesus responds in three well-loved parables, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. All stress the same fact. Every person, even the sinner, is valued and deeply loved by God. When that which was missing is restored, God rejoices. Jesus even indicates that when something is missing, like a sheep, a coin, or a son, God cannot rest until it is found. It is a stunning turnabout. God does not value the dutiful more than the straying, and finds great joy in the sinner's return.

The father in the parable of the prodigal son is love personified. He treasures each of his sons. It is the dutiful son who resents his brother. This seems to trouble the father, who cannot understand why the son is not rejoicing at his brother's homecoming. Jesus is making a point to the scribes and Pharisees. God is about forgiveness and love and celebrating those who return to the fold. Only the ungrateful and resentful stand back from the celebration and pass judgment. Such harshness is not God-like, and only cuts them off from the feast.

Once again we must examine ourselves, and strive to imitate the all-inclusive love of God, and not in judgment and self-righteousness become the new Pharisees. There's a feast of forgiveness going on. Please come in.

God bless you.

Fr. Pat