

PASTOR'S CORNER



Upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.'

There are three traditional interpretations of these parables and who the sheep or coins represent – one is that the 99 sheep or the 9 coins are the angels (there are, after all, 9 choirs of angels who are perfectly fine being left in heaven while God the Son goes after the lost sheep), and that all of us in our fallen humanity are that lost sheep that Christ seeks; the lost coin, bearing the image of God, to be found.

A second interpretation, perhaps the most common one, sees the 99 as those who are good and just who are left on the hills of justice – the 9 coins already safely secured – while the one who has strayed or is lost represents those who have wandered away from God.

A third interpretation suggests that the 99 are the proud whom God leaves to themselves – that the one is the humble man who recognizes he is lost without God and can trust God to find him. And this interpretation is particularly important because we are told the parables are addressed to the Pharisees and scribes. The Pharisees and scribes think themselves *righteous people who have no need of repentance*. At the same time, they are not rejoicing with Jesus Christ as the lost tax collectors and sinners are being found by him. They apparently are neither the great cause for God's joy, nor are they the joyful friends and neighbors of God.

And, of course, these interpretations are not in conflict – and we need to keep in mind all three. We remember that Christ has come seeking after us all, and rejoices in his work to bring us salvation – we have to remember that he seeks each one of us when we sin, always desiring to forgive if we will let him and draw us back rejoicing to the fold – and we have to remember that he has a special love and care for all of those who humbly recognize their need for him, that he *rejoices more over* the humble heart than over the proud.

In Christ, through Mary,

Fr. Dominic David Maichrowicz, OP