

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. The Pharisees were proud. They were sinners who complained about grace. They murmured against Christ for receiving sinners. They murmured because they were hard of heart and could not extend forgiveness to others. So they prevented God from forgiving them. They labeled the sinners with whom Jesus ate unworthy. And yet those who came to eat with Jesus would openly confess their unworthiness. Consider Zaccheus. He ate with Jesus. He confessed his sins. He repented. He changed his life.

The man convicted of his sins by the Holy Law of God confesses he is unworthy. He is truly sorry for his sins. In repentance, he can accuse no one. Knowing the enormity of his sin, he confesses his utter depravity. He knows his salvation must come from outside himself. He knows that he needs a Savior. In contrition, he receives God's grace with thanksgiving.

Not so the proud sinner. He delights in his own righteousness. He believes he needs no grace, holding up his own works, and then pointing an accusing finger at others. Grace shows compassion, pride shows only scorn. The more the proud believe they are righteous, the worse sinners they become. The more they are quick to judge others, so are they themselves judged.

Who have you judged? Who is it that has sinned in a way you count as unforgiveable? Who is it that you have secretly believed is not worthy of the grace of God? Who is it that you have slain with the poisoned tip of your tongue, gossiping and scorning, pointing a Pharisaical finger, all the while feeling vindicated by your own works?

The devil goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Through condemning hearts and gossiping lips he devours many. But it is not the one gossiped about that is devoured. It is the one who does the gossiping. Those hurtful, murmuring lips are in truth the devil's jowls, devouring the one who is prideful, the one who gossips, the one who judges.

Repent. For to find yourself better than others, to judge yourself superior to other sinners, is to take your place with the Pharisees and Scribes complaining against God. Repent. Have you forgotten that you daily pray that God would forgive you as you forgive others? Repent. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.

For a sheep to be separated from the shepherd is to die. A lost coin has no value, it is dead. Like the lost sheep, its' value lies in being found, being rescued, being redeemed. Indeed its' value is in the One that redeems it. For a coin to be found is to restore it again in value to the One who found it, the One whose image it bears.

So, O Found One, so, O Sheep restored, O Coin returned, remember that the Lord receives sinners and eats with them. He is a God of grace and love. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. He seeks the one lost sheep. He sought you. Though He was angry with you, His anger is turned away, and He comforts you.

He left heaven and the heavenly host, the myriads of angels and the four living creatures and the 24 elders, and He was made Man to save man. He, being sinless, humbled Himself. He who commanded angels ate with tax collectors and sinners. He humbled Himself to redeem you, that the Flock be complete. He has become your salvation.

Take heart, for the woman sweeps the whole house seeking the one lost coin. The Bride of Christ, the blessed Betrothed, the Holy Church, lights the lamp of the Gospel, and sweeps diligently seeking the lost. And by that Gospel light you were taken from darkness and death and freely given life.

When She finds the coin, when you are baptized, the image of God is restored in you by the indwelling of His Spirit. So you draw water from the well of salvation. Your value, O Redeemed, is in the price paid for you – the Blood of Christ. And when the Shepherd finds the lost sheep, when He finds you, He does not rebuke you. He lovingly bears you up. He carries you to safety.

To rest upon Christ is to lay your sins upon the very shoulders that bore the cross. To be carried by the Shepherd is to place your life in the hands pierced for you, to trust in the One with the prints of the nails still in His feet. It is to be saved and protected by faith in the One who walked through the stone walls of that sealed tomb, the One who can deliver you from death.

In Christ, your sins are forgiven. Redemption is the great equalizer. Each one of us is an unworthy guest, a sinner declared righteous, a lost sheep marked as one redeemed, a beggar vested as holy and worthy to eat from the Lord's Table. Here the Lord who ate with sinners feeds the redeemed His own Body and Blood. For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst.

Here you taste of the heavenly bounty of the wedding feast of the Lamb and His Kingdom which has no end. And the Shepherd declares "rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." And the Bride proclaims "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost." And there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over you.

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