

Good Call!

Called to Prioritize

September 11, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “*the year of the Lord’s favor*” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this year and always.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 15:1-10 (NRSV) *Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. "Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

Commentary:

Now the Pharisees and scribes "murmur" because Jesus eats with "tax collectors and sinners." The verb "to murmur" is related to the Exodus narratives, where the Israelites "murmur" against Moses. (Ex 16:7-12).

Those designated as "sinners" by the Pharisees would have included not only persons who broke the moral laws but also those who did not maintain the ritual purity practiced by the Pharisees. This passion for purity and legal precision led the Pharisees and the scribes to prioritize judging obvious sinners such as tax collectors.

The scandal was that Jesus received such outcasts, shared table fellowship with them, and even played host to them! The God who showed mercy to the apostate Israelites in the wilderness rejoiced over the salvation of every lost person like a shepherd who rejoices over the recovery of a lost sheep or a woman who rejoices over the finding of a lost coin. The question posed by the parables is whether we will join in the celebration – but to celebrate with God one must also share in God's compassion and kingdom priorities.

- The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, p. 295-96

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Jesus consistently prioritized compassion toward those in spiritual need. Why do you think the Pharisees and scribes grumbled about this priority?
2. Why do you think the Pharisees/scribes were so judgmental? When people are judgmental today, why do you think that is?
3. Jesus underscores the priority of compassion for the lost through his parables of the lost sheep and lost coin. What about these parables stands out to you?
4. Why is the priority of compassion so difficult for us? Why is the priority of compassion so important for us?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 15:10 NRSV Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."