The Parables of Jesus

WEEK 5 - DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

WATCH LECTURE **HERE**

PRE-LECTURE:

1. *Before* you take up these familiar parables (those of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coins, and the "Prodigal Son"), consider for a moment what is familiar to you about them. What do you expect from these parables? What have you heard about them previously? As you read Luke 15 for yourself (try two or more different translations), what stands out to you this time? What do you think Jesus is trying to communicate with these parables?

2. Have you ever lost something? What do you do when you lose something important to you? What effect does it have on you to lose something? And what do you do in order to find it again?

3. When you think of God, what do you picture? What do you imagine? When you hear the words "tax collectors and sinners," what do you picture? What connotations do these terms bring to your mind?

POST-LECTURE:

4. Consider, again, your image of God and your image of "tax collectors and sinners," which you reflected on prior to the lecture. How does this parable (and this lecture) help expand your understanding and appreciation of God's generosity? How does the father's behavior toward the younger son expand your sense of responsibility toward (or solidarity with) "tax collectors and sinners"?

5. Saint Augustine uses the image of "that younger son" to describe the human condition of wandering away from God and our need to return to God "needy" (*Confessions* I.28). How have you found yourself in need of God's abundant love? How have you experienced his open arms waiting for you, or how has this parable and lecture equipped you to do so? How might we reach out our arms more widely so that others "might come within the reach of God's saving embrace" (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 101)?

6. In what ways do you find yourself in the position of the older brother? Can you see him exhibiting any “respectable sins” as we discussed in Week 3 (“Those Ungrateful Laborers,” Matthew 20:1-16)? Where do you tend to question God’s generosity for others, or feel contempt for those you consider unworthy? How does God’s prodigality (in the figure of this parable’s father) confront and transform those attitudes and enable you to rejoice and celebrate with those whom God calls his children?

7. What does God’s preoccupation with lost things mean for you? How would it look for God’s preoccupation to become our own? How might your church or ministry aim to reflect the joy of God and the hosts of heaven at the repentance and transformed lives of sinners?