

Pastor Roy's sermon from September 11, 2016

What does the shepherd do when he finds the lost sheep? He rejoices. What happens when a person repents? There is rejoicing in the heavens. When the woman loses her silver coin and finds it? She rejoices. When we lost our keys and found them? We rejoice. . .especially after a half hour of looking, or after open the refrigerator later in the day. Or wallet. We rejoice when we find the extra belt to the mower, that item in the back of the cupboard which saves an unwanted trip to the grocery or hardware store, or that book that you've been missing for over a year. Or when the cool air finally arrives after it's been so hot. We rejoice.

Losing something brings sadness and frustration. Finding brings relief and gladness.

Losing things brings inconvenience but how much greater the concern when a person is lost. And more so when the lost. . . is one whom we love. In the parables, the shepherd and woman are desperate to find the lost. They will risk all to find, and upon finding, there is great joy.

Jesus is inviting us to consider the intensity of the love of God for us and for those who are in need of being found, appreciated, and loved. This passion breaks forth in joy when wisdom, mercy, salvation are found. These parables tell us of the heart of God. Jesus gives all to seek and find those who are lost. He will sacrifice his reputation and his wellbeing. And the result will be joy.

When we think about *our* faith, don't we often think about it in terms of what we *should* do and what we *ought* to be. We don't always think in terms of joy, as much as of duty. Am I right?

So joy and celebration are funny things. Joy often takes us by surprise. It isn't easily planned.

And everyone finds joy in slightly different experiences. One size does not fit all. So our job is to be aware of what brings us joy both in an instant sense, and in the more disciplined, long term sense. I believe we do well when we follow what brings us joy in our faith and practice. What brings you joy? Give it some thought. That is where you will find God's voice and call to you. That is where faithfulness is for you. Intensity, compassion. Joy.

Is the Spirit calling you there some adventure? An adventure into joy? May God lead us and guide us into joy.

Thanks be to God.

We pray for those who suffer as the result of war, violence, terrorism, or natural disaster. And we pray for those who willingly serve others in dangerous situations: First responders, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, members of the military, and law enforcement.

Today, especially, we remember those whose lives were lost 15 years ago in the attacks in New York City, Washington, DC, and Somerset County. We also remember and pray for those whose suffering continues because of grief and trauma. Here us O God...