

**Sermon – Year C Proper 19**  
**Jeremiah 4.11-12, 22-28 or Exodus 32.7-14; Psalm 14 or Psalm 51.1-11; 1 Timothy**  
**1.12-17; Luke 15: 1-10**

Today's lessons are about seeking and finding.

On this particular day, 9/11, the day that will live in our hearts forever, we lost part of our soul as we observed what was happening in our very own country. Following that national tragedy, my Sudanese/Ugandan friend at seminary, Titus Baraka said to me, "I am so very sorry, Karen. But, now, welcome to what it is like in the rest of the world."

Since our losses on that day, we have now experienced loss due to the pandemic that not only took part of our souls but many of our loved ones as well. Our wounded souls seek out, cry out for the God of love. The God who will never forsake us.

We found ourselves seeking God in earnest on 9/11 and then again as we navigated the pandemic, our divided country, January 6, all of the mass shootings of innocents, and the

divided country in which we live today. We are lost so many ways.

We have discovered that we are not in control of what happens around us. We have been faced with life-taking and life-making challenges. What we do with these options is how we seek God. How do we move on and find strength in God's faithfulness in such times?

We need to set control aside and become vulnerable; vulnerable enough to ask how to be different; how to be better as we navigate

God's heart-wrenching pain and anger in Exodus is a stark reminder ... at least to me ... as to how many times I must disappoint God by my behavior or actions.

I suppose when I turn to myself for answers rather than God, that is when I do not know him. I suppose that when I get caught up in minutia is when I lose the ability to understand, rather than try to look at circumstances and situations from a

mountain-top perspective. Yes, God seeks ... but I have hidden from him (thinking he won't notice).#

It would appear that no matter where we look the world situation, the national situation, state and local elections ... everywhere ... we experience divisiveness. God told Moses, "Your people, whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way I have commanded them. I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. No let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make of you a great nation." Yet, in the end God had a change of heart.

As we seek God, God seeks us. We're lost and in need of being found by God.

Our Psalm 51 this morning closes with "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.". It is the perfect plea to God in response to God's wrath in Exodus. It is an

ideal prayer to call us back from in the wilderness.

We return to God. You see, God always seeks us, always invites us. No matter how many times we may turn our backs on him.

But there is more!

As God seeks us out and we respond to God's call, are we not obliged to seek out those whom we have lost and others who are currently lost? This is why the church is called to reconcile us with one another. Churches are to be places of healing and uniting, not dividing. Churches are the places where the least likely person we know is to be sought and invited into Christ's presence. Churches are for all ... both the loved and those who may feel unloved.

Seeking and finding are what we are called to do. We must be ever vigilant in that responsibility as Christians. That is our job. We are not the judges. We are the servants. With that being said, we need to understand that there is another

powerful phrase in today's gospel. That's when Jesus tells the Pharisees, "...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15.10)

Repentance is the opportunity for one (either us as we move in and out of relationship with God or those we so yearn to bring into our church community). It is a gift of "free will". We (or they) can choose to repent/return or not. Sometimes this occurs. Sometimes it doesn't. It does not mean that we simply give up. We are called to continue to love. We are called to continue to pray. We are called to continue to hope. We are called to continue to be loving and welcoming.

And as we continue to live out our baptismal promises to respect the dignity of all humankind and to seek and serve Christ in all we will be strengthened, not diminished. We will feel God's mercy, forgiveness and ongoing grace in our lives and will find the wholeness he yearns for and seeks to give every person on this planet, our island home.

I pray that in the weeks and months ahead, we focus our energies on trying to find ways to seek new opportunities that open us to change as directed by the Holy Spirit... to reach out with enthusiasm to tell our stories of repentance and forgiveness and God's work in our own lives. It is when we have this courage to share that we all receive more than we offer. It is in this arena that we truly become a family of God, intended to love and to serve God through our relationship with Jesus Christ and one another. We need to find God so that we can become unified in God rather than divided by the world. We need to then seek those who are lost, sharing God's promises with them.

Oh how there will be rejoicing both here and in heaven on that day!

Thanks be to God. Amen.