

That Doesn't Make Sense!

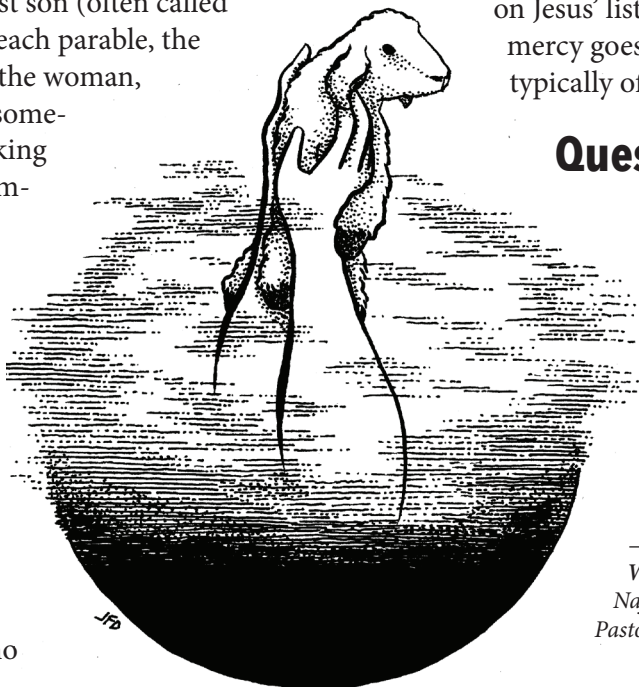
This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14 - The golden calf
- ▶ 1 Timothy 1:12-17 - Paul's gratitude
- ▶ Luke 15:1-32 or 15:1-10 - The prodigal son

The first two readings today are a precursor of the Gospel reading. The Exodus reading shows a courageous Moses challenging God to show mercy to the “stiff-necked” Israelites, which God chooses to do. In the letter to Timothy, Paul calls himself the foremost of sinners and relates how Christ dealt patiently and mercifully with him. Jesus then tells three stories of someone seeking someone or something that is lost and celebrating when they are found. These stories are so familiar to us we may not realize how ridiculous and shocking they would have been to Jesus’ original listeners. Put together, all of these stories point to God’s almost unbelievable love and mercy.

As the Gospel story opens, some good and righteous people are grumbling because of Jesus’ choice of company. Once again, Jesus is found hanging around with some shady characters and ne’er-do-wells of whom the religious folks don’t approve. To call them on their judgments and teach them about God’s ways, Jesus tells three parables that would have left them incredulous: the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (often called “the Prodigal Son”). In each parable, the “seeker”: the shepherd, the woman, and the father, suggest something about God’s shocking mercy and joy in welcoming back sinners which go far beyond what the Pharisees and scribes assumed about God.

“What man among you having a hundred sheep ... would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert ...” Jesus begins, knowing full well that no



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“Rejoice with me for I have found my lost sheep.”

Sheepish Question:
Hmm...how can I be a good shepherd?

shepherd in his right mind would risk the safety of the majority to save just one. “Or what woman having ten coins and losing one...” he continues, knowing that typically women wouldn’t spend more than the lost coin was worth to celebrate with her friends and neighbors when she finds it. Finally, he tells the famous Prodigal Son story, which today still riles up “older brothers” about God’s fairness. Put together, the three parables are meant to have a shock effect on Jesus’ listeners, leaving no doubt that God’s mercy goes far above and beyond what humans typically offer to each other.

Questions of the Week

- 1 When have you shown someone mercy when others might not have approved of it?
- 2 When have you been on the receiving end of forgiveness and mercy even though you didn’t deserve it?