

Waywardness and mercy is our theme today

The wayward nation

The wayward sheep

The wayward son

Toss in a lost coin just for measure

And we hear St Paul place himself in this light as well

And the mercy that is the response

The mercy of Moses

Seeking to change the Father's course

The mercy of the shepherd

The concern of the widow for her lost coin

The mercy of the Father

Seeking both his son's return

The Israelite nation was lost

As God's right hand, Moses led them out of Egypt

They had witnesses powerful signs of God

He led them through the Red Sea

They lived through the terrifying night of the Passover

They saw the bodies of the Egyptians lying on the beach

They then made a covenant with God

You are our God

And we will be your people

Now Moses is receiving the 10 Commandments

The rule of life for this new covenant

But he is delayed

At least according to their standards

And so they revert to their old ways

They turn to the gods of the Canaanites

They desire a god of their own hand

Made of gold

A god of riches, power, fertility and virility

And God speaks to Moses

Look at your people

I will destroy them and make of you a great nation

But Moses implores God

These are your people

He appeals to the promises made to their fathers

What would the Egyptians think of this God?

God relents

In His mercy, He has mercy on His people

A wayward nation has another chance

Bringing us to the lost in our Gospel

Bishop Robert Barron teaches there are different ways of being lost

The lost coin

It is an inanimate object

No subjective sense of being lost

The notion of being lost is totally on the one possessing the coin

There are a number of people that fit into this category

Dante's Inferno opens with these people

Very successful in the world

But no knowledge that there is more

Spiritually lost

And God, like the woman in our parable, knows they are lost

He created them

And he seeks them out

The lost animal

It is at least aware that it is in need

It may be in danger

But it may be powerless to do anything about this

In a rural area

Most of us have heard the bawling of a calf

Seeking its mother

Not knowing where to turn

Not knowing where to go

The shepherd hears his sheep

And he goes off to search for it

Then there is the Prodigal Son

In rebellion

Life is not fair

He did not sign up for this

This is not what he expected

So now he demands that he get his share

And demanding it now

Then he comes to his senses

He realizes what he has done

And he seeks to return

Even though he is not motivated by remorse

His father not only allows him back

He runs out to meet him

Throwing a party because he has returned

This woman

The shepherd

This father

All rejoice and celebrate what was lost

And is found

But not all celebrate

The older son is there

He hears the celebration

And refuses to have anything to do with his brother

And now, he rejects his father

But in reality, he had already rejected his father

Because he did not see himself as a son

He simply saw himself as a slave

But the father sees his son

And he comes to him as well

All these years I served you

Not once did I disobey one of your commands

He won't even acknowledge this is his brother

Calling him simply his father's son

The father pleads with him

To see correctly

Your brother was dead

And is now alive

**The older brother is called to see his relationship with his father
in a new light**

To see himself as a son

Not a slave

To see his father

Not a master

This was a challenge for him

It is a challenge for us

When we sin

God respects our free will

We are like the Prodigal Son

We are fooled by sin

When these things are kind of dangled before our eyes

Sin is not enjoying the things of creation

It is demanding them and possessing them

We think more will make us happy

Like the prodigal son

At first the food sated him

The wine exhilarated him

The women pleased him

These things can happen to us

So many false gods can become our golden calf

It often happens little by little

We don't even recognize our lives are out of balance

Until like the prodigal son

We find ourselves broken, empty and all alone

**We are not enjoying the goods of creation as they are meant to
be enjoyed**

All things are for the good of those that love God

We defy God's wise and loving design

And twist them to what we think is good for us

Sin initially tastes good and that is what draws us

But it turns sour and leaves us empty

Then when we realize what we have done

Where our relationship with the Holy Trinity has been injured

We need humility

The humility to acknowledge what we have done

To call it by name and confess it

Forgive me Father for I have sinned

Listen to the Father speaking to the older son

Listen to the Father speaking to our heart

Like St Paul

In today's second reading

He gives his personal testimony

I had been a blasphemer and a persecutor and arrogant

I have acted in ignorance

But he was treated with mercy

We do not know how the older son responded to the Father's plea

But we do know how we should respond

Following the example of St Paul

The grace of our Lord is abundant

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

He doesn't wait for our perfection so he can forgive us

He invites us back to himself and forgives us

When we confess our sins

He offers his grace to perfect us

Do I believe this for others?

Do I believe it for myself?