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Here's Hope
by Rev. Jerry Rea

He Wants You Back

There is an interesting idea at Ephesians 2:12. Paul said that the Gentiles had no hope. He meant that they were alienated from the family of God. He reasons then that through Jesus all that changed. The Gentiles were taken into God's family, with all the rights and benefits that entails. An amazing thing happens through Jesus. Those who've been "outside" have been welcomed "inside." God broadens His forever family. If you watch closely (even in the Old Testament) you'll see that God has been moving here for a long, long time. The bottom line is that we have hope.

Any number of us can identify. We know on an experiential and emotional level what it means to have no hope. If we're not careful, when we attend a funeral we may feel hopeless. Those of us who are seniors, know what it's like to realize that our experiences in this life are falling away. Those who move through divorce can become very despairing, even depressed at the thought of losing what once was a most important relationship. A little closer to home, we can get so lost in our sins that we get hopelessly lost, with no idea (whatsoever) of how to mind things. I'm reminded of that old awful story of the mother who, after watching her son executed on the scaffold, had only one comment: "some things are too broke for mending." Our choices to sin move us away from Jesus. It's like moving away from the light on a dark night. Step by step we lose our way. It's like being lost at sea. To the west there is water. To the east there is water. To the North and South, it's all the same - water. Every direction looks bleak and... hopeless.

But, here's some good news. When we get lost Jesus comes looking for us. An example might help. When Peter denied his Lord, Jesus didn't just write him off. Jesus went looking for him. Jesus found him fishing with friends and made breakfast on the beach. Then came the necessary (but very painful) question, "Peter do you love me?" Here's another example. Jesus admonished his disciples to leave the 99 sheep in the fold and go looking for the one lost one. On the surface it seems illogical. But when we consider the heart of God, it makes perfect sense. First, the shepherd knows that one lamb is missing. He doesn't miss that. Then he does the most loving thing, he goes out looking for him. In three parables in Luke 15 there are three "lookers." The woman who lost the coin "looks" for it. The shepherd who lost the lamb "looks" for it. The father, who lost his son, longed for the return of his son daily. We know he wants him back by the way he reacted when the prodigal returned. There was no sermon, no "lessons to be learned," no cynical "I told you so." No, the father just rejoices. Though the son feels terrible, planning his speech as he moves home, the father rejoices.

So, here's your hope. If you're lost God is looking for you. He'll come. In the same way that Jesus looked for Peter. In the same spirit that the woman sought her coin. With the same passion that the shepherd looks for the one lost sheep, Jesus is looking for you.

He wants you back!
Jerry Rea