

ONE-MINUTE DEVOTIONS FOR THE CHURCH MUSICIAN

September 12, 2010

For Sunday, September 12: Luke 15:1-10

Here we encounter the first of three lost-and-found stories. It's too bad we don't get them successively in the Revised Common Lectionary (the second and third are assigned to Year C's fourth Sunday of Lent), because the message of God's joy in recovering what was once lost rings out as a powerful crescendo as we move from one story to the next – from the lost sheep to the lost coin and finally to the lost son. (Experiencing these in sequence drives home the point that the parable of the prodigal son is *not* about redemption.)

The sequence is set up by Luke 15:2, "And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." It is fine to work to strengthen the faith of those in our midst through good music and preaching. But what are we doing as a congregation to reach out to those on the fringes of society who hunger for words of confidence and hope?

Study the congregational trend reports posted on denominational web sites and you will observe that giving to missions is sharply down. Instead, many congregations are spending that money on themselves.

What if we, the musicians of the church and therefore leaders of its worship life, were to undertake initiatives that would direct those in our assembly out of their comfort zone? What would they see if they turned outward instead of inward, toward the liminal landscape of the margins? Isn't the Lukan promise of great heavenly joy, when the lost are returned to God, enough to inspire us to action?

*"Come to me, repentant sinners;
leave behind your guilt and shame.
Come and know divine compassion,
turn to me, I call your name."*

-- Delores Dufner, "Come to Me, All Pilgrims Thirsty"