

## “IN THE **HEART** OF THE D.S.”

### **We must get to know them – The Lost Coin**

***Or that woman, having ten [silver] drachmas [each one equal to a day's wage], if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and look carefully and diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she summons her [women] friends and neighbors, saying, rejoice with me, for I have found the silver coin that I have lost. Even so. I tell you, there is joy among and in the presence of the angels of God over one [especially] wicked person who represent (changes his mind for the better, heartily amending his ways, with abhorrence of his past sins). Amplified Bible- Matt 15:8 - 10***

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The presentation of Junius B. Dotson at our Tri-district retreat forced me to a period of deeper meditation as to the **what, how and why** we do ministry. My conviction was deep since in my new role as DS, I am navigating through places where there are committed people that are struggling with issues of diminished hope and decreased vitality. I find a will to do and a love for Jesus that matches any other; however our people are standing still, at time uncertain as to what to do to ignite ministry and infuse life into our struggling ministry context. My resolve is that our current malaise is a function of leadership. It was leadership (good or bad) that got us here and leadership that will get us out. We cannot fix the past but we could determine in our heart that we will have a better future, period!

Our Bishop has unmasked the **state** of our annual conference. Rev. Dotson has spoken to the state of the UM church. It is evident that the burden to assure a better future rest on us. We cannot sit back and be critical or complacent; we then become a part of the problem. We must find a way to greater life and vitality.

I believe that it starts with a positive affirmation and a will to live. We must take responsibility to challenge the status quo and to use the resources offered us through our UMC connection. Above all, we must intentionally embrace a commitment to **basics**; the things that have been tried, tested and proven to transcend time and work even in the most difficult of time. Those things that all research returns to after spending millions of dollars just to realize that they really work. So here it is: The Bible, prayer, fasting, deeper spirituality, dependence on the **Holy Spirit** (this is the area of our struggle since reliance on him makes us at times public spectacles as it invites us into the unknown and the terrain of the uncomfortable and the uncontrollable) and making disciples for Jesus Christ.

## **The Lost Coin:**

This DS affirms that coupled with the aforementioned and through the power of our intellect, the magnanimity of our social consciousness and activism, we can make our district better and revive our churches. What I define above is what the spiritual moguls and the prophetic voices of our time and our faith is considering to be the “first thing.” We must put first thing, first.

No one will do it for us and it cannot be done by any one person, alone! Connecticut, we are in this together; this has been our legacy and through intentional leadership we must reclaim it! Let’s look to a basic biblical strategy as part of that “first thing.” The narrative below informs all that I have said above:

The Lost Coin focuses our attention on the value of every life and relationship. It focuses our attention on the power of redemption and the jubilation vested in the reconnection of one individual who was degenerated, disenfranchised or marginalized. Finding the lost coin celebrates the power of redemption! It unmakes the potency of faith and resilience even in the face of despair and uncertainty. The Amplified Bible best describes this account in the book of Luke; it states:

Thus I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one, especially wicked, person who repents (changes his mind, abhorring his errors and misdeeds, and determine to enter upon a better course of life) than over ninety-nine righteous persons who have no need of repentance. Or that woman, having ten silver drachmas (each one equal to a day’s wages), if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and look carefully and diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it; she summons her (women) friends and neighbors, saying, rejoice with me for I have found the silver coin that I have lost. Even so, I tell you, there is joy among and in the presence of the angels of God over one (especially) wicked person who repents (change his mind for the better, heartily amending his ways, with abhorrence of his past sins).

The moral of the story is synonymous with our current malaise; while our situation seemingly is multifaceted, it boils down to people, their lives and their future (think about it!). Isn’t that why the church exist? As with this story, it places significant value on the coin (people) that was lost. It celebrates the reunion with the owner and the added value it brings to the nine coins that were safe. Only through reconciliation of the lost one is the community of ten made whole. As with the other parables presented by Jesus, the efforts of the shepherd and so too the efforts of the owner of the coin made reconciliation possible. Does the parable not suggest that evidently no one will do it for us? We must invoke “effort?” We must get up and with a singular vision and seek and find?

By working diligently to find the lost, and that is without blaming the lost, they were able to reestablish the beloved community. What is significant within this narrative is the effort that is vested in finding the lost coin. Jesus presents this woman as **caring**; she understands and values her possessions. She sees it as an extension of herself. This is the fruit of her labor; it’s a representation of her self-worth. To lose it is too lose part of her tangible value which is equated to one day’s work. Our sense of lost is the disillusionment that we feel and the lost-ness and inaction that’s apparent. It’s the evidence of committed people that are struggling with issues of diminished hope and decreased vitality.

**Note the Biblical perspective on this woman's action: She will to do! She did not stand still or settle within the comfort of the "known." In the face of uncertainty, she ignited ministry and infused life** into her struggling ministry context. Reversal of her malaise was a function of her leadership, her own volition. It was action (good or bad) that got her there; and note, her action under the unction of the Holy Spirit reversed her situation. She did not rest in the past, dream about what was, licked her wounds but determined in her heart to have a better future, period! How do we compare as a district, as a church? What about in our own lives? We encounter reversal or lost and give up without attempting to get up and live (another discussion for another day).

Note that her action in retaining that value (*Value = She sees it as an extension of herself. This is the fruit of her labor; it's a representation of her self-worth. To lose it is to lose part of her tangible value which is equated to one day's work*) is **to light a candle, sweep the house and "seek diligently"** to find the coin. The power is in the **'seeking.'** What about us as a church, are we seeking beyond **our walls, our personal comfort or love for self and 'our church?'**

The notion of seeking is to acquire something that is lacking and not yet found. It is understood **that given that it is missing, it is impossible to be "self-actualized" until it is found and reconnected** to the whole. While the text suggested that the sheep got lost naturally, the coin seemingly got lost accidentally. Regardless of the circumstance, there was always a diligent effort to reunite them to their community. Maybe if we start intentionally seeking (making disciple), we could rediscover our joy and embark on the road to self-actualization, joy and viability.

***From my Heart to your Heart -  
Getting to know your D.S. through these written narratives!  
More to be said in the next issue.***