

## ***Do-Able***

United Congregational Church of Westerly, UCC, Pawcatuck, CT  
April 6, 2025 – A Sermon for Sunday Morning Worship during Lent  
Text: Luke 15:4-10

Dear ones, these are surely extraordinary times we are living through. Just yesterday, hundreds of thousands of people joined in rallies and marches across this country and around the world in protest of the dangerous and downright cruel policies of the current administration in Washinton. These “Hands-Off” rallies were grass-roots organizing at its best. Peter participated in the Providence march and I know a number of you also participated in the Westerly Hands-Off event. The really remarkable thing about all this to me is that it seemed as though each of the marchers was protesting something different as revealed in the protest signs many were carrying. Some were there to protect Social Security. Others were there to protect veterans benefits and the rights of government workers. Still others were protesting the demonization of the LGBTQ+ community. Many were there to protest the vicious immigration policies and still others the restrictions being imposed on free speech on campuses across the country. It really was quite extraordinary.

And as someone who has organized an event or two and participated in several protest events and marches over the years, I can assure you I have never seen anything like what we all witnessed yesterday. The logistics of pulling something like this off are absolutely mind-boggling and that’s if you’re just trying to do it in one location. This was in all 50 states and internationally! Wow! That, dear ones, was something I would not have thought possible. It just doesn’t seem do-able. And yet, it happened. It

happened and something shifted in our country, in our lives, in the world – because it did.

The other thing so obvious about these protests in the coverage from different cities and towns is how truly joyful they were. Peter was at the Providence rally and march, as I said, and he explained to me how energizing it was just to be there in the midst of all those people who had gathered together to say NO! to the intentional destruction of so many things that make the United States, well, US. As they walked from Hope High School on the East Side down through the Brown campus, down college hill and then across the bridge into downtown with their ultimate goal being city hall, people lined the streets to cheer them on. There were no passive observers. Interestingly, there also were no counter-protestors. Once they reached city hall, speeches were given but the best thing I saw on a Facebook video was The “Raging Grannies” singing group on the front steps of the hall. A band played behind them while people sang along and danced even if they didn’t know the words. The rain was pouring down but still people came, laughing and dancing – so joyful about coming together to search for something so many are convinced has been lost – the soul of the United States.

So, as I sit down to write the message for this morning I cannot believe this is the text I chose for today. It is just too on point so I can only conclude this is God’s work. So let’s think about our text from Luke a bit. This passage describes a moment when Jesus was telling parables to the crowd who had been following him to listen to his teachings. As often happened in these situations, some of the local religious leadership chose that moment to criticize Jesus for his choices. In this case, it was the Pharisees (religious leaders who were sticklers on tradition and precise performance of rituals) and scribes, lower level leadership,

who were stage whisper grumbling that Jesus chose to eat with sinners and tax collectors. Brief sidebar comment here – tax collectors were usually seen as worse than ordinary sinners because they functioned as collaborators with the Roman Empire and its odious tax system which funded the empire on the backs of the poorest people in it. Sound familiar?

So, Jesus told two parables in quick order. First is the familiar parable of the lost sheep. This is one of many sheep stories in the Gospels because the shepherd imagery was a common way for folks to understand God – as the loving shepherd who cared for them in the midst of a dangerous world. In this parable, the shepherd leaves the rest of the flock – 99 sheep to be precise – and takes off to find the one sheep who was unaccounted for. When you consider how rough and bleak the terrain of this region was, and still is, you can quickly see that this scenario immediately echoes with thoughts of how impossible this would be. That sheep could be anywhere! It could have fallen into a ravine and gotten hurt. It could be stuck in a bramble bush. It could have been carried off by a wolf! But still the shepherd resolves to find it. And the shepherd is successful against all the odds. He is so excited by the time he gets back to the town to where the other sheep and his neighbors are waiting, that he invites them to celebrate with him because what was lost had been found! Joy results when the lost are found, when the un-doable is completed successfully anyway.

Jesus then immediately moves into another parable with the same theme. This time it is the story of a woman who has 10 coins (probably Greek drachmas), each of which is worth approximately one day's wages. Let's be clear that this would have been a fortune to a single woman living on her own and she undoubtedly would have taken great care of them to keep them safely in her

hands. This was not someone with a stack of pennies or dimes or quarters or even half dollars. This represented everything this woman had to provide for herself when times were hard, something quite extraordinary for a woman living alone in Jesus' time. Think of these coins as her 401K, if you will. So, it is no surprise that when one of these coins turned up missing, this woman would never have shrugged her shoulders and said "oh well, I still have nine more." Nope, she would search for it until she found it. And how did she search for it? The same way we would have. She gets herself some more light and methodically cleans her house until she finds it. Note that the assumption here is that no one had sneaked in and stole it. She didn't use it herself and not remember doing so. She knew she had lost the coin and she was determined to find it, no matter what. We should realize here that one of these drachmas was roughly the size of a dime, maybe a little bigger. Finding it in what amounted to a mud brick house with a dirt floor would be no easy task. Some might even have told her it was impossible. But, she did it anyway and she was successful. And, again, she was so excited that she had accomplished something others thought was not do-able that she invited all her friends and neighbors to help her celebrate. Once again joy results when the lost is found, when the un-doable is successfully completed.

We need to remember that in both of these parables, as well as the Prodigal Son parable which follows them, Jesus is justifying why he spends so much of his time with the people on the margins of life, with people others saw as unworthy or unimportant or not worth the time to even think about. The text has the religious leaders describing them as sinners and, technically according to strict interpretations, they might have been because it took money to travel to Jerusalem and make the required sacrifices. It also

took time away from work to make such a trip and in a subsistence economy such as the one in which Jesus lived and ministered, this just was not possible for most people. So, Jesus made the conscious decision to go to the people he knew needed to hear his message about God's unconditional love the most. He went where people needed to know that God cared about them, all the time, and not only when they were "following the rules." And, dear ones, the people responded! This is why Jesus was always surrounded by crowds wherever he went. This is why he made the religious authorities so frightened, and this is why they were always plotting ways to trip him up because they knew he was dangerous to their way of life. They knew Rome would have no patience with someone telling the peasants they had value and worth because God loved them. So, they came after him. And next week we will remind each other how that all worked out.

But, for now, let's remember that in these two parables Jesus is teaching us that joy results when the lost is found, when the seemingly un-doable is successfully completed. Joy is found when we decide that we are worth whatever work is necessary to push back against the losses incurred when injustice gains the upper hand. Joy is found when we come together to tackle problems or situations that need our efforts to be resolved. Like helping with a "Don't Sweat Small Stuff Workday" here at the church. Like supporting the church financially, even when we need to stretch to do so. Like making the time to participate in the ministries of the church by serving on boards or committees or the music ministry or the kitchen ministry or the new visitation ministry. Joy results when the un-doable becomes do-able and that, dear ones, takes all of us. Thanks for being here today and every week. Always remember that we love you, we need you, we cannot do this work – God's joyful work – without you. Amen.