

BASINGSTOKE AND READING - CIRCUIT SERVICE RESOURCE

The Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

Please go to the last page for the words of all hymns

We Gather in God's Presence:

Words of welcome and Notices - steward

Welcome to this act of worship, whether you are alone or sharing this time with others. This week we are thinking about how God delights in all who turn to Him.

Introduction

Jesus tells a series of three *lost and found parables* that explore the importance of searching, of not giving up on that which is lost: a shepherd who searches for a lost sheep until it is found, a woman who cleans her house until she finds a lost coin, and a father who relentlessly scans the horizon until he found his lost son. This week, we are exploring the lost sheep and the lost coin, and how God never stops searching for those who are lost.

Call to Worship

Some words from Psalm 51:10 -12 (Easy-to-Read Version)

God, create a pure heart in me,
and make my spirit strong again.
Do not push me away
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Your help made me so happy.
Give me that joy again.
Make my spirit strong
and ready to obey you.

A gathering prayer:

Let us pray:

God, we your people love you.
We have come today to praise you,
to listen to your word and to learn from you.
We are different from each other:
young and old, quiet and loud,
serious or frivolous, tired or lively.
Help us all to worship you
with one heart and mind. **Amen**

We sing our opening Hymn: H&P 1: All people that on earth do dwell, William Kethe, (d. 1594) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xM6Ke4IKJM>

Let us offer God's gift of peace to each other:

Radiance of Hi Glory (David Adams, 2009)

Christ, the Good Shepherd,
seeks out those who are lost
until he finds them and brings them home to peace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

Prayer of Approach and Adoration -

Loving God,
our Shepherd and King,
your very being calls us here;
we long for your love,
we ask for your leading,
and we lift our lives to you.

Good Shepherd of our souls,
we are glad that you call the lost to be found,
you seek us out and make yourself known to us.
We praise and adore you for your unwavering faithfulness,
your unfailing love, your generous mercy
and your constancy through all our ups and downs...

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness -

Loving Shepherd, who never stops searching for us, we bring our faults and our weaknesses to you:

God, who seeks the lost,
if we have closed doors
where we should have opened them:
forgive us.

If we have stayed in the box
where we were called to break out:
forgive us.

If we have kept ourselves in a bubble
that prevents us from perceiving
what is outside of our experience:
forgive us.

If we have been gatekeepers
instead of welcomers:
forgive us.

Silence

God loves and cares for us,
he places us into his family of grace,
he restores us with joy,
he celebrates over us with rejoicing
for he has reconciled us to himself
through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen! Thanks be to God.

Let us share together in saying 'The Lord's Prayer'

We Listen to God's Word:

The parable of the Lost Coin - see YouTube Link
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOGLGovzpR0>

OR

A Reflective Illustration: *You are twice mine*

There is a story of a young man who lovingly built a little sailboat. Having finished it, he took it to a stream behind his house and put it in the water. The little boat sailed perfectly! But the wind blew hard and his boat was taken away and he could not find it. After he searched for a long time he sadly returned home.

One day he was walking downtown and saw his boat in a store window. He went into the store and found out from the store-owner how much the boat would cost. He returned home and got all the money he had. After paying for the boat, he was walking home and said to his boat, "you are twice mine, I made you and I bought you".

This beautiful little story teaches us a very valuable lesson about God's love for us.

- God made us.
- We sinned and turned away from God.
- God loves us so much that he sent His only Son to die for us.
- Jesus willingly laid down his life on the cross to reconcile us back to God.

Just like the young man who loved his boat so much that he gave all the money he had in order to buy it back, so also, God loves us so much that he gave the most precious gift he had (Jesus Christ, his Son) in order to reconcile us back to himself. We too are twice God's.

Let us now hear our two readings:

- Epistle Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17 - reader
- Gospel Reading: Luke 15:1-10 - reader

We sing our next hymn: H&P 69: The King of love my shepherd is, Henry Williams Baker (1821-77) based on Psalms 23 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWfZ-8s71-k>

Homily/Sermon:

Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost...(Luke 15:6).

I am sure that you all have had one of those moments when you have lost or misplaced something – and you need it immediately. You knew exactly where it was (or where you thought it was), but it is not there now. And, instead of calmly thinking about it, you rush around looking in every conceivable place. It might be your keys, phone, or glasses (on your face) – finding it becomes so important that you would not settle until it is found.

Jesus responded to the Pharisees' criticism of him eating with sinners by telling a series of three '*lost and found parables*' (the lost sheep, the lost coin, *and the lost son*). These parables convey something of that feeling when you are searching, and of the sheer relief and joy when you find whatever you are searching for. The first two parables we are focusing on today, demonstrate an intense effort to regain something highly valued.

We do not know exactly why the sheep in Jesus' parable got lost: maybe it was through its own foolishness, following its own appetite looking for greener pastures, or separating itself from the rest of the flock and unaware that it has lost its way. The coin perhaps got lost through no fault of its own. It is a victim of circumstance. Probably, the chain that had fastened the coin to the other nine had broken loose and it just dropped off unknowingly.

But both the shepherd and the woman missed the sheep and the coin because they were both greatly loved and valued by them.

Both the shepherd and the woman painstakingly searched for the sheep and the coin. Their careful and thorough searches mirror God's active compassion for every person who runs into trouble. God is **not** an indifferent Creator idly standing by. God seeks out with persistence and determination those who have strayed, to restore them to his loving care. The joy of finding is highlighted as the crucial point of both parables. The rejoicing of the shepherd on the way home and the celebration of both the shepherd and the woman with their friends and neighbours speak of the joy God feels over sinners who repent.

A modern farmer might find Jesus' parable of 'the lost sheep' rather strange. It does not make sense to leave the ninety-nine to go and look for the one. Instead, common sense may want to ensure that the ninety-nine are safe – as you can not afford to lose any more. A modern banker might also think that Jesus' parable of 'the lost coin' is not good economics. He or she might think that the nine coins need to be banked and kept safe – the missing one may or may not turn up – whatever happens, the interest on the other nine should mitigate any loss of the one coin.

But this is not God's way. Jesus' point is that his eating with sinners is an example of God's abundant mercy and extravagant grace to each one of us. It may not make sense from our human perspective to seek the *one thing that is lost*. But God's love for everyone means that all those missing need to be found and brought back into God's care. The key to Jesus' parables of the lost sheep and the coin is God's irrepressible desire that we return to Him, and God's overflowing gladness when we do.

'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners... (1Timothy 1:15)

The Apostle Paul writes his letter to the young Timothy to instruct and encourage him in his leadership of the Church at Ephesus. Paul's letter to Timothy is full of advice about how to lead the Church in love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith (1Timothy 1:5). Paul does not set himself up as the perfect, faultless spiritual father – instead, Paul openly wears his own sinful history as a persecutor of those who follow Jesus, and he now seeks to help the church to become mature in its relationship with Christ.

Paul considers himself as the 'chief' of sinners, rescued by the grace and mercy of God – which now enables him to offer himself as an example of the redemptive work of God through Jesus Christ in his own life. Paul's designation of himself as 'chief among sinners' helps him to recognize the overflowing effectiveness of God's mercy, and to encourage the young Timothy, as he holds out an offer of the same mercy to the church of Ephesus.

Jesus' lost and found parables remind us of two things:

- **First, God wants us to welcome everyone:** Jesus sharply contrasts the judgmental attitude of the Pharisees with the welcoming outreach of God. Jesus had been welcoming everyone. The Pharisees noticed that Jesus was not just having dinner with people like them. He was also including people they did not approve of – and this really annoyed them. In Jesus' two parables we heard today, the sheep is precious to the shepherd and the coin is valuable to the woman. Both were lost. A painstaking effort was made to find both. There was rejoicing and celebration when both were found. Perhaps to the Pharisees' disappointment, Jesus implies that God delights in these people too – it is not our job to discount anyone.

- **Second, God loves each one of us:** Jesus invites each one of us to see ourselves as the lost sheep and the lost coin. Perhaps, we never seem to get things right. We are always messing up. We feel as though we are hidden in a dark corner alone in a scary wilderness, vulnerable and exposed to danger. Maybe we feel trapped by circumstances. We know that God loves us – after all, God loves everyone. But when we look at everyone else, we feel that God must love them a lot more. Jesus' *lost and found parables* tell a different story – God loves each one of us so much that God never stops looking for any of us. When we realize that truth, there will be great rejoicing in heaven.

'You are Twice mine'

Just like the young man earlier in our reflective story who loved his *lost boat* so much that he gave all the money he had in order to buy it back when he found it; likewise, God loves us so much that he gave the most precious gift he had, Jesus Christ, his Son, in order to reconcile us back to himself. We too are twice God's. God made us – we were lost in sin – and Jesus found us and brought us home to God rejoicingly.

May each and every one of us know that we are found by a loving and caring and gracious God, who rejoices over us when we turn Him. Thanks be to God. **Amen**

We Respond to God's Word:

Let us offer our lives and gifts to God:

God of all Creation,
you love every part of all that you have made.
Open our eyes to see the world as you see it.
Teach us to care as you care,
enlarge our hearts with your love,
that we may notice those who need your love.
We offer you our lives and gifts for your kingdom,
all for transformation through your grace and love,
made known in Jesus Christ your Son and our Saviour. **Amen**

We sing together our third hymn: H&P 436 or H&P 215: Father, hear the prayer we offer, Love Maria Willis (1824-1908) and others - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1-9wam-2Rk>

A Prayer of Praise and Thanks -

Let us offer our praise and thanks to God:

God of the wayward and the weary,
we praise and thank you.
Thank you for caring about each one of us –
for bestowing upon each one of us
your worth and value.
We praise you for your persistent love.
May we, too, love persistently
and offer the welcome that you gave,
following the example of your redeeming love
in Jesus Christ your Son and our Lord. **Amen**

Prayers of Intercession - Roots Magazine (adapted)

God who longs for all to be rescued, we offer to you our prayers for the church, the world and ourselves:

God, our Shepherd,
the cares of the world can draw us away from you.
Like a coin falling into the shadows,
sudden misfortune enters our lives and we are lost,
rolling away from all that held us safe.
We pray for all those affected by serious illness,
breakdown of relationships or loss of employment:

In the silence of our hearts,
let us mention those names and situations that come to mind:

Faithful and caring Shepherd,
bring us safely into your fold.

God, our Protector,
the temptations of the world can lead us astray.
Like sheep sighting a patch of greener pasture,
we go after what is new and more exciting.
We pray for all who are tempted away
from what is right, meaningful, and good.

In the silence of our hearts,
let us offer our own prayers to God:

Faithful and caring Shepherd,
bring us safely into your fold.

God, our Guide,
where darkness has descended,
when more attractive propositions beckon,
we pray that we would not forget you –
because you would never forget us.
And as you love and care for us,
so may we look out for one another –
to seek and to bring safely home.

In the silence of our hearts,
let us offer our own prayers to God:

Faithful and caring Shepherd,
bring us safely into your fold.

God, our Shepherd, Protector, and Guide,
we give thanks for the life of those
who have recently died... (names)...,
Bring us with them in our turn,
safely into your eternal joy,
where there is no more pain,
no more sorrow or weariness,
and every tear is wiped away.

In the silence of our hearts,
let us name and hold before God
those who have recently died
and those who grieve for them:

Faithful and caring Shepherd,
bring us safely into your fold.

Good and caring shepherd,
all our needs are known to you.
Thank you for all who watch over our souls in love,
all who work in your service in and through your church,
bless and uphold them with your power,
that they may lead godly lives in the world:

Thank you for your longsuffering patience with us.
Mercifully accept our prayers,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

We conclude our time of Worship together:

We sing our closing hymn: H&P 223: I will sing the wonderful story, *Francis Harold Rowley*
91854-1952) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAcpYr9I6Tk>

Closing Prayer and Blessing:

May God who searches for the lost,
open our eyes to see as He sees,
to love as He loves,
and to rejoice with all who are found by Him.
...and may God who cares for all people,
our Protector, Shepherd, and Guide
be with *you/us* now and always. **Amen**

Sending Out:

We go into the world to seek the lost to God's joy and delight.
In the name of Christ. Amen

All people that on earth do dwell,

Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise;
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? the Lord our God is good;
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
The God whom Heaven and earth adore,
From men and from the angel host
Be praise and glory evermore.

The King of love my Shepherd is,

Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
And he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul he leadeth,
And where the verdant pastures grow
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love he sought me,
And on his shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With thee, dear Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight;
Thy unction, grace bestoweth:
And O what transport of delight
From thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
Within thy house for ever.

Father, hear the prayer we offer:

Not for ease that prayer shall be,
But for strength, that we may ever
Live our lives courageously.

Not forever in green pastures
Do we ask our way to be,
But the steep and rugged pathway
May we tread rejoicingly.

Not forever by still waters
Would we idly, quiet stay;
But would smite the living fountains
From the rocks along our way.

Be our strength in hours of weakness,
In our wanderings be our Guide;
Through endeavor, failure, danger,
Father, be Thou at our side.

I will sing the wondrous story

Of the Christ who died for me
How He left the realms of glory
For the cross of Calvary

*Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me
Sing it with the saints in glory
Gathered by the crystal sea*

I was lost, but Jesus found me
Found the sheep that went astray
Raised me up and gently led me
Back into the narrow way

Faint was I, and fear possessed me,
Bruised was I from many a fall;
Hope was gone, and shame distressed me;
But his love has pardoned all:

**Days of darkness still come O'er me;
Sorrow's paths I often tread;
But the Saviour still is with me,
By his hand I'm safely led:**

He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet;
Then he'll bear me safely over,
Where the loved ones I shall meet: