



Third Sunday before Advent 7th November

Father God help us to come to you this morning with open and thankful hearts. Fill us with the joy and peace that comes with knowing you. Be with us as we walk in your light, rejoice in your love and reflect your glory.

Amen

Hymn 606: Soldiers of Christ arise

Welcome

The Lord be with you,
and also with you

Prayer of Preparation

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.
Amen**

Prayer of Confession

Our Lord Jesus Christ said: The first commandment is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Amen. Lord, have mercy.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.**

**We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen**

Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy
Lord have mercy

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in life eternal through Jesus Christ our lord. **Amen**

Gloria

**Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

Collect for today:

Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of all: govern the hearts and minds of those in authority, and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to his just and gentle rule; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

New Testament Reading: Romans 14: 7 - 12

⁷ We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. ⁸If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ Why do you pass judgement on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgement seat of God. ¹¹For it is written, 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.'

¹²So then, each of us will be accountable to God.

Hymn 69: Be thou my guardian

Gospel Reading: *Luke 15: 1 - 10*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

Glory to you, O Lord

1 Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

3 So he told them this parable: ⁴ 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.'

8 'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ

Sermon: Jose from Thursday 4th November

Have you ever lost something you value? It need not be valuable but might have sentimental value. How did you feel on finding that lost article? I imagine great joy, just as the shepherd on finding the lost sheep and the woman her coin in the parables we have heard this morning.

Jesus told these two parables together with that of the prodigal son in response to attack and criticism from the religious leaders and teachers of the law to his association with tax collectors and others whom they regarded as sinners, saying 'this man welcomes sinners and eats with them'. As far as they were concerned Jesus was committing an offence by associating with them, for these people did not observe the laws laid down by them and were therefore seen to be defiled. It was the deliberate Pharisaic aim to avoid every contact with such people in order that they would not themselves be defiled. Barclay in his commentary states that strict Jews, into which category the Pharisees would fall, instead of saying 'There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents', said 'There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who is obliterated before God'. Sinners in their eyes could not be saved and were doomed to destruction. Jesus, on the other hand, came to save the sinners, for in Luke 19: 10 he says 'For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'

Jesus in telling these parables uses examples of everyday life. In the first he tells of the shepherd caring for a flock of 100 sheep, who on finding one missing leaves the 99 and goes in search of the lost sheep. This may seem to us to be a foolish thing to do, but a shepherd then was personally responsible for the sheep and if a sheep was lost, must at least bring home the fleece

to show how it had died. A shepherd's life was hard and dangerous and pasture was scarce and sheep could easily become scattered as there were no walls to restrain them. To a shepherd then it was all in a day's work to risk his life for his sheep. George Adam Smith, a Scottish theologian, wrote of the shepherd 'On some high moor across which at night the hyenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning on his staff and looking out over his scattered sheep, everyone of them on his heart, you understand why the shepherd of Judaea sprang to the front of his people's history: why they gave his name to the king and made him the symbol of providence; why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice'. It also shows just how hard a shepherd's life was then and still is today and the care and love he has for his flock.

The lost sheep in this parable represents a person who has lost his / her way and as already implied in the quotation from George Adam Smith, is an analogy in which Jesus as the Good Shepherd identifies himself with the image of God as a shepherd searching for the stray sheep in Ezekiel 34 vv.15-16 'I will feed my flock and I will lead them to rest declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken, and strengthen the sick, describing how God will seek his lost sheep and set a Shepherd over them.'

So who are the other 99? It must be the Scribes and Pharisees, since the lost sheep represents one who has lost his/her way or as the Scribes and Pharisees saw it, those who didn't keep their petty laws, whom they classed as sinners, beyond redemption and deserving of nothing but destruction. However though the self righteous Scribes and Pharisees might, through keeping all the laws be afforded a place in God's kingdom, there will be no rejoicing in heaven for them; but for those who have strayed, been found, or have themselves turned back to God, there will be great rejoicing in heaven for each and every one of them, just as the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son rejoiced on his son's returning home and the shepherd on finding his lost sheep.

This parable illustrates the love and compassion God has for everyone and teaches us how to care for others regardless of how they act towards us. We are called to love and to care for the lost, for every person is precious to God. A hymn written by Frederick William Faber, a notable English hymn writer and theologian and quoted in Barclay's commentary speaks of the joy God feels when a lost one is found and comes home:

Souls of men! Why will ye scatter
Like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts! why will ye wander
From a love so true and deep?

Was there ever kindest shepherd
Half so gentle, half so sweet,
As the saviour who would have us
Come and gather round his feet?

For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

The parable of the Lost Coin again uses imagery that those listening to Jesus would have understood. The lost coin in this parable would have been a silver drachma worth about 4 pence for which the woman was hunting. It would not have been difficult to lose a coin in a Palestinian peasant's house of that time and searching for it could take a long time. The houses were very

dark, lit only by one little circular window and the floor would have been of beaten earth covered with dried reeds and rushes. To find a coin on a floor like that was like searching for a needle in a haystack. She would have swept the floor hoping to see the coin glint or tinkle as it moved. She would have been eager to find the coin for either of two reasons: A matter of sheer necessity for though something worth 4p in today's money sounds so little, it was more than a whole day's wage for a working man in Palestine at that time. It may, on the other hand, have had sentimental value. The mark of a married woman at the time was a head-dress comprising 10 silver coins linked by a chain, for which she would have scrimped and saved for many years – it was the equivalent of a wedding ring. It was also something that was specifically hers and could not be taken away from her should she ever be in debt, so not only was it like a wedding ring but also possibly an insurance. She would have searched for the lost coin as we might a lost ring.

In either case it is not difficult to understand the joy she would have experienced in seeing at last the glint of that lost coin and holding it again in her hand – it's no wonder that she would have rejoiced with her friends and neighbours. God, Jesus told them is like that. The joy of God and of all his angels when one sinner returns home is just like the joy of the woman who loses her most precious possession with a value far beyond money, and then finds it again. The Pharisees would never have dreamed of a God like that, one who actually searches for those that are lost and have turned away from him.

The lesson we can take from this parable is that God is loving and forgiving. Though someone may have been lost they can still be found, can repent and be admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven.

We have so much to thank God for, the most significant being His sending of Jesus, his incarnate Son to show us just what the Father was like and how much he loves and cares for every person whom he has created in his own image. We are called as Christians to do the same.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers

The Peace:

Take a moment and offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for each other and our church family church community. Maybe call or text someone who would enjoy sharing the peace with you.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy, that you may be kept safe and blameless in spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

Hymn 70: Be thou my vision

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.**

Hymn 72: Bind us together

Remembering the Lord's Supper:

Take a moment to remember the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. As we think about this meal - with the washing of feet and bread and wine shared with friends - we remember Jesus' offering of himself on the cross. We rejoice in his resurrection from the dead and look forward to the coming of God's Kingdom. While we cannot receive Christ in the sacraments in the usual way, we can be the presence of Christ in our homes and communities and we can be a praying presence wherever we are.

Hymn 195: From heav'n you came (the servant King)

Closing Prayer:

Lord God, we thank you for this time of worship; may your love and peace remain with us in the coming days. Be with us in all that we will think, say and do so that our lives may reflect your glory. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen