

Service Sunday 11th September 2022

Call to worship

Come, let's shout praises to God,
and raise the roof for the God who saved us.

Let's march into his presence singing praise,
lifting the rafters with our songs.

And why?

Because God is the best.

Drop everything and listen,
listen as God speaks.

A gathering prayer

God, we your people love you.
We've 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're going to carry on worshiping as we sing to God. This song uses the word hosanna which was used by people in Bible times as a term of praise to God.

Song - Hosanna, hosanna WF 33

Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest,
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest
Lord, we lift up your name, with our hearts full of praise,
Be exalted, O Lord, my God,
Hosanna in the highest!

Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!
Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings
Lord, we lift up your name, with our hearts full of praise,
Be exalted, O Lord our God,
Glory to the King of kings!

Prayer of thanks and confession

Heavenly Father, you love us without limits – no matter what – your heart overflows with forgiveness – we bring to you our thanks and praise.

Loving Jesus, you love everyone so much that you gave your life on the cross to save people and set them free. We bring to you our thanks and praise.

Holy Spirit, you are always with us – you fill us with power and strength so that we can live our lives for you. We bring to you our thanks and praise.

Lord we want to follow you wherever you might lead us and ask us to go. Forgive us when we choose the wrong way. Forgive us when we lose our concentration and we lose our way. Help us to turn back to you Lord, to reach out to you and hold your hand, be our shepherd and lead us safely home. Lord we want to follow you wherever you might lead us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lord's prayer

Offering and prayer

God you love us so much you want to give us good things. So now we thank you for all your good gifts and we offer our gifts of money and of our lives to serve you and to share your love. Amen.

Lost and Found



What do you think is happening in this picture? Maybe this child has just found a toy that has been lost and hidden for ages and that they've been looking for ever since.

- Has anyone ever lost something that was special or important? What was it? What did you do? How did you feel? Did you find it?
- How does it feel to find something you thought was lost?
- Has anyone ever got lost? What happened? Did somebody come to find you?

Stories of things lost and found

Jesus told several stories about lost things and we're going to look at a couple of them this morning to see what they tell us about God's love for every person.

Luke 15: 1-7 One Sheep

15 Tax collectors[Ⓜ] and sinners were all crowding around to listen to Jesus. ² So the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses started grumbling, "This man is friendly with sinners. He even eats with them."

³ Then Jesus told them this story:

⁴ If any of you has 100 sheep, and one of them gets lost, what will you do? Won't you leave the 99 in the field and go look for the lost sheep until you find it? ⁵ And when you find it, you will be so glad that you will put it on your shoulder ⁶ and carry it home. Then you will call in your friends and neighbours and say, "Let's celebrate! I've found my lost sheep."

⁷ Jesus said, "In the same way there is more happiness in heaven because of one sinner who turns to God than over 99 good people who don't need to."

Finding the Sheep

We have a lost sheep somewhere in the church this morning. Would anyone like to help me look for it?

(search for sheep)

Jesus said in his story that the shepherd was so happy when he found the lost sheep that he called all his friends together to give thanks and celebrate. The owner of the sheep was so happy at finding the missing sheep that he just wanted to shout for joy. We're going to do that right now as we sing

Song – Jesus put this song into our hearts WF 49

Jesus put this song into our hearts,
Jesus put this song into our hearts,
It's a song of joy no one can take away,
Jesus put this song into our hearts.

Jesus taught us how to live in harmony,
Jesus taught us how to live in harmony,
Different faces, different races, He made us one,
Jesus taught us how to live in harmony.

Jesus taught us how to be a family,
Jesus taught us how to be a family,
Loving one another with the love that He gives,
Jesus taught us how to be a family.

Jesus turned our sorrow into dancing,
Jesus turned our sorrow into dancing,
Changed our tears of sadness into rivers of joy,
Jesus turned our sorrow into a dance.

Luke 15: 8-10 One Coin

Jesus also told a story about a lost coin. Jesus said "I've got a maths problem for you. Add, subtract, multiply, divide. Use your fingers, use your toes if you like. Here's the question – what number makes an angel smile? The Pharisees (who were the religious leaders) groaned. They hated maths – and those word problems in particular. So while they were undoing their sandals Jesus told them a story. Once there was a woman who had 10 coins. And each coin was worth a day's pay. One day she went to count her coins. And suddenly she had a maths problem too! 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. That's how many there were supposed to be. But somehow, someone had done some subtracting. And now there were only 9! Desperate for a solution, the woman tackled the problem at once. She lit a lamp. She swept the floor. She lost track of how much time it took. Inch by inch. Metre by metre. The woman looked carefully into every crack and crevice.

There is a lost coin somewhere on the stage. Would somebody like to come and help Sandy look for it?

We've found it! We've found the missing coin! The woman counted her coins again – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. And then she smiled. For that 1 lost coin had made all the difference. What number makes an angel smile? The answer is the same. One. Just one. Each one. Every one.

Jesus said, "In the same way God's angels are happy when even one lost person turns to him."

Talk 1

So what do these 2 stories tell us about God and how God loves us?

These 2 stories told by Jesus about a sheep and a coin that were lost and then found can help us to learn more about how much God loves people, and especially those people who for some reason have got lost or drifted away from following God. The shepherd with a missing sheep and the woman who had lost a coin are like pictures of God. The shepherd and the woman do whatever it takes to find what is missing no matter how long they have to look or how far they have to walk and they do this because they have such amazing love for the sheep and the coin. We might think it wasn't really worth going to all that trouble to find 1 missing sheep when there were still another 99 left. Or what was the point in turning the house upside down trying to find 1 small coin when the woman still had 9 other coins? But God is just like the owner of the sheep and the lady with her coins when it comes to people who have lost their way and need help to find their way back. God will not stop looking and searching and He really, really wants to find people and help them to find their way back to God. And just like the shepherd and the woman who were so excited when they found what had been lost, so God also is full of joy and gladness. God celebrates when somebody who has been lost is found.

My Jesus My Saviour WF 75

My Jesus, my Saviour
Lord there is none like you
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of your mighty love
My comfort, my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You

Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have
In YOU

Talk 2

But are some things really worth spending loads of time searching for if they get lost? Are there some things that just aren't worth the trouble maybe because they seem less important or they can be easily replaced? Are some things more lost than others? Are some people more lost than others?

In his book *How To Find Lost Objects*, Professor Solomon gives practical advice on how to find anything that's been lost – keys, money, jewelry, anything. He says that to find a lost object, you must be in the proper frame of mind. And that means paying attention to the 3 C's. They are: **COMFORT** Start by making yourself comfortable in an armchair or sofa. Have a cup of tea, perhaps. **CALMNESS** Next, empty your mind of any unsettling thoughts. Pretend that the sea is lapping at your feet. Or that you're sitting in a garden full of birds and flowers. **CONFIDENCE** Finally, tell yourself you **will** locate that missing object. (To enhance your confidence, you might want to don a thinking cap.) What we're looking for may actually be where it's meant to be, or where we last used it. Or it may be we're actually staring right at it but somehow not seeing it. And if we find ourselves getting too agitated with all the searching we should return to the armchair and calm down for a bit.

But seriously, can we say that some people are replaceable or are less valuable and loveable? What if God was to shrug his shoulders and give up looking for 1 of us or somebody that we know who has gone the wrong way and become lost?

The 2 stories told by Jesus of the lost sheep and coin show us that God will definitely not give up on anyone no matter what the situation. God loves and values everyone, each individual person. These stories show us that God notices when people are lost or missing and God searches for them and doesn't give up. Jesus described himself as a good shepherd and he spent his life looking for and saving people who were lost. And God rejoices, God is overjoyed when someone who was lost is found and returns to be part of God's family.

We've seen that God loves and values every person, and that nobody is less loved by God or less important to God than anyone else. Let's think for a moment of any people who might be lost or missing or maybe overlooked or unseen in our community and world today.

- Young people who are caught up in gangs
- A person living on the street or sofa-surfing
- People living on their own of whatever age
- People with mental health difficulties

You might have thought of others. Is God calling us to look for and to notice those who are lost or missing and to reach out to them with God's love in some way?

Let's rejoice because God searches for us, keeps us in sight and never gives up on us or anyone when we are lost. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Song - The Lord's My Shepherd WF 90

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone,
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

Prayers for others

Faithful God, you care for the lost people of this world so we bring them to you now.

We pray for people who no longer feel at home, who are lost because they have lost everything due to war which has deprived them of homes, land, family and friends.

God, you search for your lost children and you rescue them;
we pray for those caught up in war, famine and natural disaster. We pray for the people of Ukraine and other areas of conflict – that war will stop and peace and security will come. We pray for the people of Ethiopia and other countries facing food shortages and starvation – that they will receive urgent food supplies. We pray for the victims of the floods in Pakistan – that they will receive the help they desperately need.

We pray for people who feel lost because they have lost all sense of direction in their lives because of illness or sadness.

God, you heal your lost children and guide them;
we pray for those whose journey of life is passing through a fog of illness or sorrow. In a moment of silence we pray for people known to us - or for ourselves – facing times of bereavement, ill health, uncertainty or frustration.

(Silent prayer)

God of healing, we bring these people and situations to you and ask you to fill them with your love, comfort, strength and hope.

God, you call to your lost children and forgive them;
we pray for those who despair of finding their way to forgiveness and to love, peace and joy.

When we are lost, loving shepherd, search for us, rescue us. Heal our self-inflicted wounds and the hurts that life brings. Guide us onwards, calling us by name, forgiving us when we stray. Lift us up and bring us safely home.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Song - Great is Thy Faithfulness R&S 96

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be

Great is Thy faithfulness

Great is Thy faithfulness

Morning by morning new mercies I see

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided

Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
Blessings all mine with 10, 000 beside

Sending out prayer

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 so much,
and fill our hearts with so much love,
that we notice those who need your love.

Amen.

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