

## Luke 15:1-10 – Sunday 15 September, 8am

### Lost and Found

Today's Gospel reading has a definite tone of 'being lost' – and being found – and this is illustrated for us through the real experience of lost sheep and coins.

And the thread of this part of Jesus' teaching – forgiveness that is unconditional and non-judging – leads us to how gracious God's love – God's nature and God's forgiveness is.

We aren't being given a lesson on the feelings of the sheep – or lost coin (if a coin could have feelings) – but rather this is about trying to understand how God feels.

The sheep – and the coin – do nothing to contribute to their being found. God does the work – because that is what the God Jesus reveals to us does – he seeks out the lost.

By looking at the example of the lost sheep and lost coin we can think about how much we – as a human race – is lost – and how much we – as an individual might be lost – but not in terms of beating ourselves up by seeing all the bad traits that we have but by knowing that despite all that, God will become exhausted and will go to any lengths to find anything that goes astray – a lost cause for us – simply because he loves us

And like the sheep and the coin – sometimes we don't even realise that we are lost because the abnormal way of living and interacting with each other – unforgivingly – unkindly and unfairly – has become a normal way of life. We are lost in that it is not natural for us – if it is true that we are made in God's image of love – to be squabbling and being unkind to each other at the very least – and warring and cruel at the very worst. But God knows because all God knows is love – so despite what we get up to – God's nature of loving forgiveness and kindness and unconditional love is all that we can receive despite ourselves – because that is what God is – and furthermore God doesn't hold back – what we get is all that God has to offer – we are not drip fed.

God's love has been expressed through Jesus the Good Shepherd – who will 'come and seek out and save the lost' – and do so in the light of the failing 'shepherds of Israel' – in this case the Pharisees – who are too busy judging and bewailing the imperfections of people to think about their role in the name of compassion and kindness and of being a good shepherd.

What we can take away from today is that God is patient and forgiving and considers us worth risking everything for because we are his creatures whom he created and loves. . Even though we may give up on Him from time to time, He never gives up on us. Through Jesus we are shown the compassionate grace of a loving and faithful God – a God in whom we can build a loving relationship with – as Jesus spoke of.

This is a God very different from the one people had heard about through the Old Testament – a mighty and powerful God who could send plagues and diseases - who could forgive if asked – and who demanded the slaughter of animals before he actually let you know you were forgiven.

Jesus shows us the face and nature of a very different God today and always – he shows us how to live out the parables of love and he shows us how to bring love to the unlovely and unloved.

In God's world the lost do not remain lost forever – we can hope and trust that no matter how we might be lost right now – God will seek us out to be with us and pull us through – somehow. He will bring us home in the end – and home is where the peace is that passes all understanding – no matter what.

Rev Jacqueline Drake-Smith – Sep 2019