

**Order of Service  
15 September 2013  
East Calder 11:15 am**

Worship led by: Rev Dr AJ Groenewald  
Musician: Jill Dickson & Praise band

**Gathering of God's People**

Time when we greet one another and prepare for worship.  
Those who are able please stand for the entry of the Bible.

***"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." Luke 15:10***

Welcome:

To all who are weary and seek rest,  
To all who mourn and long for comfort,  
To all who struggle and desire love,  
To all who are burdened and needing a Saviour,  
To all who are strangers and want fellowship,  
To all who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
To all the children,  
To everyone whom the Lord have called.....

Because a true welcome is a practical one, we need to know who you are. If you are a visitor, or new to our fellowship or have a practical need, please fill in the welcome card that is in the pew Bible.

**Worshipping God Together**

**Call to worship**

Minister: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your  
unfailing love;

**All: according to your great compassion blot out  
my transgressions.**

**MP 809**

**Blessed be the name of the Lord**

**Opening prayer and the Lord's Prayer**

Let us pray:

Lord, you sat at the same table as sinners.  
No one was an outcast from your hospitality and love.  
We gather before you today, an ill-assorted bunch,  
all sinners but welcomed by you.  
Thank you, generous, searching Lord  
for seeking out and saving us.  
Lord, we confess that we forget our status.  
Independent and worldly-wise,  
we forget that you have sought us.  
Like lost property, we languished in darkness  
until the light of your love shone upon us.  
Forgive us our pride and short-sightedness, we pray in the name of Jesus  
who taught us to pray:

**ALL:** Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom  
come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our  
daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us  
not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the  
power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

### **Children's address – Catherine Alexander**

#### **MP 582                      Rock of ages Reflecting on God's Word**

Reading: Luke 15:1-10 (NT page 1048-1049)

Reader: Bob Rendall

#### **Background to the reading**

The two parables are connected by theme (the joy of the lost being found) and by key words ("lost" and "found," "rejoice" and "celebrate,"). Together the three parables form a tightly knit unit with a single, strongly Lukan theme—God's love for outcasts and sinners. The arrangement of this unit is almost certainly due to Luke's hand.

Jesus told the parables to tell the Pharisees and the teachers of the law that God loves the sinners but hate sin. They did not like Jesus' fellowship with sinners and tax collectors. Tax collectors and sinners were excluded from the religious community. Tax collectors were a despised group of Jewish people who collected taxes for the government at a profit. Usually they did not show any mercy on their clients. The people were convinced that they

collaborated with the occupying pagan Roman power. The sinners could have been anybody that was regarded as unclean such as people with disabilities, those who worked with animal skins, Gentile foreigners and women.

Pharisees and legal teachers did not consider it proper to eat with those excluded from the religious community; besides such dangers as eating unclean food, intimate table fellowship meant acceptance.

And then the most shocking part is when Jesus tells the parables in the first two instances he uses "sinners" as his main characters namely a woman and a shepherd. They were regarded as unclean. But Jesus drives the point home - God's love and mercy is for everyone and His love is always inclusive, something the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law could not understand. We even know that during this time the Jews had a frequently quoted prayer "Blessed be God that he has not made me a woman" (Scott 1990:312).

In the two parables that we read the words seems similar and intended to have the same meaning. In the first parable it is about a sheep that walked away from the rest while the second is about a lifeless object who did not have a lot of worldly value. It is interesting to note that the relative value of the lost item increases in each parable: one out of one hundred, one out of ten and finally one out of two.

But although the one drachma as it is written in the Greek text is not much in worldly standards, personally it meant a lot to the woman. It was most likely part of her *ketubah*, or dowry—the only money she brings into the marriage that is technically hers even if the marriage is dissolved. One drachma was about equal to a day's wage. It suggests that her father's family was quite poor.

The lamp here is a small, hand-held oil lamp, which emits little light but is more helpful than the small (if any) window that may be in her wall. The rough stone floors of poor homes had many narrow cracks between the stones, into which coins and fragments of pottery fell so often. By sweeping with a broom she might hope to hear the coin rattle against the floor.

In Jewish tradition the angels in heaven generally took great interest in God's workings on earth; each person was specifically assigned at least one guardian angel.

Now Jesus drives the point home: God's mercy seeks out all those in any circumstance, who are lost!

**O the deep, deep love of Jesus!**

## Sermon

**The text for the sermon is verse 10: "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

It is remarkable that Luke is the only Gospel writer who actually tells us three stories with the same theme: lost and found. The first parable and the last one, which we did not read are similar in the sense that both the sheep and the prodigal son were lost because of their own doing. But the second one is different in the sense that the coin is not a living animal or being. IT just got lost as any other objects often do.

So I think the true emphasis and message lies to me in the second parable. It is as if is sandwiched between the other two for a reason.

It is quite hard to make sense of the second parable in as much as it is all about a lifeless object who cannot be blamed or held responsible for being lost. In verse 10 the writer interprets the one coin as referring to "one sinner who repents" .

If we take into consideration the context of the word "sinner" then something fascinating becomes apparent. The Jews considered anyone who is not a Jew, and anyone who according to them are unclean like I illustrated in the explanation of the background, a sinner. So it can mean that the coin represents the Gentiles and all those who are "unclean". But bearing in mind - it is not their fault. It is not as if they deliberately chose to be born as disabled, as woman, as foreign Gentiles!

So what is the writer of Luke trying to tell us?

There are people who cannot help that they are lost.

There are people who do not understand the Gospel message of God's loving forgiveness for the sinner. There are people who grew up without the strong foundations of faith. There are people who do not know the comfort of knowing the presence of the Lord. There are people who needs believers to convince them through deeds of love and forgiveness that there is a God who cares.

And yes, sometimes even those who have faith, can get lost because of personal circumstances. Sometimes the faithful do get lost not because of

their own doing or choice. Sometimes when illness comes knocking on our doors, it does make us feel as if we have lost our direction and focus in life. Sometimes when we face a life threatening challenging situation, people have said that it feels like their foundation has been taken away. Sometimes when our loved ones die, then it is possible to feel like a lost wee soul in the vast emptiness of grief and bereavement.

And in all these case, we are lost just like the drachma.

But just like the parable demonstrates , God's love and mercy is greater than our own desperate situations. God's love is visible in the many cards, flowers, letters and people who genuinely wants to help. God's mercy is visible in the way people help us to get through our trials and tribulations, in practical ways beyond our reason and understanding.

And every time when we do get through ignorance and the dark valleys of illness, bereavement and loss, God our Father rejoices in heaven!

I am sorry but I do not know about you, but this knowledge makes me tearful, to think that the Almighty God cares so much about us that He seeks out those who are lost and He is actually happy when we are "found" or "whole" again. To think that the Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth bothers about us!

There is no reason for anyone in this world to be "lost" anymore. You and I have a huge responsibility. We must reach out to each and every person who does not know the presence of God. We must take care of those who are lost because of illness, bereavement and brokenness. But we must take great care of our own lives of faith too - because we can get lost as well. We do not live in glass houses.

If you are sitting in this church this morning and you feel that you are in a place where you should not be, remember that God will seek you until He finds you.

If you are sitting in this church and you cannot find your way back, the Lord God is here and He knows everything about you. He will find a way to help you find your way again.

If you are sitting in the church and you feel that you do not have the emotional energy or the ability to return - the presence of God is coming to you.

If you are sitting in the church and you feel lost because no-one loves you - the love and mercy of God will search for you until He finds you wherever you are.

Wherever you are in your journey of faith, always remembers the powerful message of the two parables in the words of Jesus:

"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."

May we have the share the mercy of God's forgiving love everywhere we go and may we all be worthy instruments in His hand - reaching out, bringing the healing love to those who are lost, bringing wholeness in a broken world!

Amen

Let us pray:

Gracious God, whose Son came to search for the lost,  
we pray for all who lead us:  
may they watch for those who stray,  
venture into forbidden zones and seek in the darkness.

Lord, in your mercy:  
hear our prayer.

We pray, Lord, for all who are lost:  
for those who have not heard the good news,  
and for those who refuse to acknowledge it.

Lord, in your mercy:  
hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick and for those who feel abandoned.  
We ask that the troubled would know your peace,  
and the lonely the comfort of your presence.

Lord, in your mercy:  
hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have lost loved ones.  
We ask that those who mourn may know your comfort;  
that those whose families are broken may know your closeness.

Lord, in your mercy:

hear our prayer. Lord, we bring you all these prayers  
in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the teller of tales and the seeker of  
the lost.

Amen.

### **Responding to God's word**

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MP 515: "O Love that wilt not let me go"**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Robert Gardiner

**When I survey the wondrous cross**

**Benediction receive the blessing of God and go in peace:**

In the knowledge that you have been found,  
go now and seek the lost, helping to bring them home.  
And the blessing of God almighty,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit  
Be with you all  
Now and for evermore  
**Sung Amen, Amen, Amen**

Please remain standing as The Bible is removed.

**PRAYER**

Lord, we confess that we forget our status.  
Independent and worldly-wise,  
we forget that you have sought us.  
Like lost property, we languished in darkness  
until the light of your love shone upon us.  
Forgive us our pride and short-sightedness, we pray.  
Amen.