

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
11-09-2022  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Jeremiah 4: 11-12, 22-28	A scorching wind will come People have turned from God
Psalms 14	Only the fool denies God
1 Timothy 1:1-2, 12-19	Jesus came to save sinners of which Paul was Chief
Luke 15: 1-10	Jesus with sinners tells parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin

### Introduction

Today's parables are about things being lost, and things being found, and behind these parables is the amazing message of God's Grace.

So today, I would like to explore our broken human nature, our need for God, and the wonderful grace that God offers to all humanity in the person of Jesus.

God's Grace can be simply described like this:-  
"Nothing good we do will make God love us any more.  
Nothing bad we do will make God love us any less."

If we think about this in human terms, what the bible tells us, is really quite outrageous. We are lost, but in Jesus we can be found. There is nothing we can do to earn it. Jesus has already done it for us on the cross. That's why the message of Jesus, the Gospel, is such "Good News".

### How do we view ourselves?

Let's begin by looking at our own human nature. Clearly human beings are capable of wonderful things. We create, we love, we care, we nurture. The bible tells us that we are created in the image of God, so it is no surprise that we can show great love. But it also tells us, that as human beings, we are not God. We do not always do everything perfectly. At the very beginning of the bible, we hear of "the fall". The bible uses the word "sin" to describe our fallen and broken human nature, and it is our sin that cuts us off from God.

We only have to look at the news, and the bad things that we do to each other, to see how this biblical world view makes a lot of sense.

We are capable of great good, but also great evil. The novelist, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, once said that the line between good and evil does not lie between nations or ideologies but rather runs through the heart of every person.

So, the Bible tells us that as human beings we are lost. And not just some of us, but all of us. This is not something we hear in our secular culture. I wonder if we think about this? Do we realize that without God we are lost?

But the bible doesn't stop there, and leave us lost without hope. The bible let's us know that there is a way we can be found, and Jesus is the way.

### How do we view God?

Let's continue by looking at how we view God.  
Do we view God as someone wanting to punish us?  
Or do we view God as someone wanting to save us?

I think because of the fact morality is associated with Christianity, many people view God as some sort of cosmic policeman waiting to catch us out, and throw us in jail.

But that's not what the bible tells us. Over and over, we hear how God loves us. In probably the most well known verse of the bible, we hear:-

<sup>16</sup> 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> 'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16,17)

In today's readings we hear the great apostle Paul telling Timothy:-

<sup>15</sup> The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost.

And today we hear the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin. In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd represents God. The shepherd earnestly searches for the lost sheep and rejoices when it is found. Similarly, the woman rejoices when she finds her lost coin.

God wants to rejoice in us. God doesn't want us to be lost. God wants to save us. God wants us found, and that's why Jesus came.

## What does this mean for us?

So how do we go from being lost to being found? How do we live into this wonderful grace that God offers us in Jesus?

Firstly, we need to repent. God loves us, and wants us to be found, but God doesn't force us. We need to begin by repenting and we looked at that in great detail a couple of weeks ago. When we repent, we turn our lives around, and instead of focusing entirely on ourselves we focus first on God.

Secondly, we need to forgive. Just as God forgives us, through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are called to forgive others. In the Lord's prayer we recite "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Forgiveness is hard, but it is only in forgiving others that we can truly live into the forgiveness that God offers us.

And we need to take our part in the "finding" of others.

In one sense all humanity is lost, and we are only found as we turn to Jesus. If we are "found" in Jesus, then we need to take our part in the life and faith of the church, so that others too might be found. This also is not an easy task, but it is where we find meaning and purpose for our lives. True fulfilment comes from following Jesus and taking our part in the life of God's church.

This week we have had the profoundly sad news of the death of Queen Elizabeth II. Her majesty's role as Queen included being the Supreme Governor of the Church of England and the Head of the Anglican Communion. Our late Queen carried out these roles with an amazing sense of duty and faith. In her majesty's life, we have been provided with an extraordinary example of dedication to serving God. As we reflect on her majesty's life of service, I believe there is an opportunity for us to reflect on how we are called to serve God in our own lives.

## Conclusion

Today we have looked at being lost and found. The bible tells us that we don't really deserve forgiveness, but in God's love for us, God sent Jesus into the world. So, we are lost, but in Jesus we can be found.

To me this is the most profound joy we can experience in life. Knowing that in Jesus we are known, and loved, and found.

As those who are found, as those who count themselves as followers of Jesus, we are called to live into what it is to be found. And in living lives of repentance and forgiveness, we are called to take our part in seeking to help others, so that they too may know the joy of being found in Jesus. Amen.