

twelvebaskets



ORDINARY 24C

A complete Sunday service ready to use
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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Order of Service

Call to worship

Hymn:

1 STF – All people that on earth do dwell OR

83 STF – Praise, my soul, the King of heaven

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

Hymn:

443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love OR

494 STF – Come, thou fount of every blessing

Readings: Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28; Psalm 14; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-10

Hymn:

362 STF – Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity OR

277 STF – My song is love unknown

Reflections on the readings

Hymn:

462 STF – Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world OR

470 STF – Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

Hymn:

323 STF – I will sing the wondrous story OR

561 STF – Now I have found the ground wherein sure my soul's anchor may remain

Blessing

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Call to worship

Lord of the dawn,
Your love rises to greet us, new every morning,
And we gather in your name, trusting in your mercy,
And not in any goodness of our own.
Come, by your all-embracing Spirit,
O God, and transform our hearts today we pray,

Amen.¹

Hymn:

1 STF – All people that on earth do dwell OR
83 STF – Praise, my soul, the King of heaven

Opening Prayers

Lord of all creation,
Lord of each and every moment,
Lord who created each of us and who guides our lives,
We come into your presence today, bringing our whole selves as an offering to you.

Living, loving God,
We come in our strength and weakness;
We come with hopeful expectations that we will meet with you today.
As we join together to worship you,

May the troubles of the past be left in your hands.
May the worries we carry be eased by your grace.
And may the unspoken desires of our hearts be acceptable to you.

Lord, we are here to meet with you.
Come and meet with us, we pray. Open our hearts that we might receive your presence.

As Saul fell to the ground on the Damascus Road,
We pray that we will be overwhelmed by your love and Spirit
And join with the chorus of angels proclaiming:
“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honour and glory and praise!”

We offer all we are to you.

Amen.²

We say together the Lord's Prayer

¹ Call to worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

All Age Talk

Today, we are talking about how amazing God's love is, especially when we feel lost, left out, or like we've made mistakes. And we're going to think about how we can share that kind of love with others.

Let's start with a game:

I'm going to hide something small (e.g., a coin or toy sheep) in the front of the church. I'll give you 10 seconds to find it! Ready...go!

[Give a few kids or volunteers a moment to look for it. Celebrate when it's found!]

In today's reading from Luke 15, which we will hear later on in our service, Jesus tells two stories: one about a shepherd who leaves 99 sheep to look for just one that's lost, and one about a woman who loses a coin and searches everywhere until she finds it. When the lost sheep and coin are found, there's huge joy!

Jesus tells these stories because people were criticising him for spending time with people they thought were "bad" or "unworthy." But Jesus shows that God's love never gives up on anyone.

In 1 Timothy 1, Paul writes about his own life, saying he used to hurt people and get things badly wrong. But Jesus was patient with him and turned his life around. Paul says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst." He's amazed by God's grace!

Let's think about what it feels like to be lost and found:

Everyone close your eyes for a moment and think about a time when you felt left out or alone.

[Pause.]

Now think about someone finding you, calling your name, and giving you a big hug. How does that feel?

[Invite a few quick responses if people feel comfortable.]

Both our readings today remind us that God's love never writes anyone off. No mistake, no lostness, no failure can stop God from wanting us back. And that's not just for us, it's also how we're called to love others. We're invited to help each other feel found, welcome, and included.

So, let's think about this week:

- Is there someone you know who might feel lonely or left out at school, work, or even in our church?
- How could you show them they are loved—like the shepherd who searched or the woman who kept sweeping until she found her coin?

I'd like everyone here to put a hand on their heart. Quietly, tell God one person you want to reach out to this week with kindness or encouragement.

Jesus shows us a God who searches, finds, and throws a party when someone comes home. Let's be people who share that joy, who include others, and who celebrate when anyone feels loved.

Let's pray together:

Loving God, thank you that you never give up on us. Help us to look for those who feel lost, to welcome them, and to show your love every day. Thank you for your amazing grace.

Amen.³

Hymn:

443 STF – Come, let us sing of a wonderful love OR

494 STF – Come, thou fount of every blessing

Readings: Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28; Psalm 14; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-10

Hymn:

362 STF – Meekness and majesty, manhood and deity OR

277 STF – My song is love unknown

Reflections on the readings

Today's Gospel is a well-told and well-heard tale. It has all the elements of a classic parable: missing and found, Jesus admonishing religious leaders, and a deeper truth being explored beyond the surface reading.

The story of the lost coin, like that of the lost sheep, is a reminder of the unending generosity of God's love. How, in a universe of countless galaxies, God's love is on offer to each and every one of us. How, no matter what our lives have consisted of or what we have done, the chance for renewal, refreshment and liberation is there for us. How wonderful. Yet also how troubling.

Because the story draws our attention to this:

"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."

This is a little bit awkward! Because here we all are. Sat in church this Sunday and yet we are being told that those who have no need to repent, to turn away from things that deny God, will not be the ones that are celebrated when we make it to heaven.

So, time to go home? No! Not just because we are as likely to be the missing person or the lost coin, but also because we can ourselves be gatekeepers and deniers of God's love in how we act. Meaning we continue to have things to say sorry for and to turn once again to God.

³ All Age Talk written by Tim Baker

But let me not get ahead of myself. I'd like to draw you to two different moments. The first, the moment of loss and finding. The second, what it feels like to lose and be found.

One of my lasting memories of the home I grew up in is my dad walking around singing "has anyone seen my car keys." It's a small moment from childhood. It is also an everyday moment of things being lost. The song was never sung in jest, it covered a moment of anxiety. We couldn't leave to go out if we couldn't find the keys. No doubt it was also frustrating to my dad that he couldn't find his keys regularly. Nobody likes losing things. It brings out the best and worst in us. The initial flash of "it'll be ok" is often lost by frustration and anger at ourselves. How could we be so stupid? Why couldn't it just be in the place I put it? Then those negative emotions are removed once we find what we were looking for. Life continues and the interruption ends. Yet while it may annoy us, God is willing to look out for each of us and offer us love, without the complaints or frustration because his searching isn't because of carelessness, or scattyness, it's out of unending and divine love.

The love that means we turn the house over if a child has lost "that" toy which means the world to them. The love that means we go to an extra shop to get a favourite food or snack for someone special to us. The love that means we go beyond our normal rules and expectations to show our feelings to someone else.

Which is why it's important to also look at our church life here. In this building and community. Who and how are we offering God's love to the world? It may be through Sunday groups or a food-bank, cafes or drop-in shops. All are wonderful moments of surprise encounter and all can offer love and support in a moment of desperation.

But are we truly welcoming all? Or are we setting our own rules and regulations and forgetting the spirit of God's love. Do we get too tied up in rotas and tasks, and then we forget the human and the need for compassion and space?

In short, do we become - in the name of love and welcome - the Pharisees when Jesus is calling us to sit among those society throws out?

I'll let you think on that.

Today's reflection is meant to affirm and challenge you. Affirm because God's love is always on offer. Challenge because we can all become unexpected gatekeepers of God's love.

The affirmation and the challenge go together – we must never separate the two. Both are elements to reflect on and consider. Because all we humans can ever do is offer a glimpse of God's love. It is far bigger, wider, deeper and all-embracing than any of us can imagine. And if you don't yet feel it, don't worry, God's already trying to reach you and maybe, just maybe, in that moment when you've given up all hope it'll find you. Just like finding the car keys at the last minute.

We may have given up. But God never does. Amen.

Questions to consider

- Think of a time you lost something important to you - how did it feel when you realised you had lost it? What spurred you to set out and find it?
- How do we try to make people feel welcome here? What changes have we seen in our lifetime about what that may look like?
- Jesus tells these parables to gently rebuke the religious leadership, who spend their life creating and enforcing rules. How do we keep a balance of being open to new people and ideas while also creating structure and safety for all?

- When have you encountered a surprise moment of God's love? What did you learn and why did it matter?

Amen.⁴

Hymn:

462 STF – Come with me, come wander, come welcome the world OR

470 STF – Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided

Prayers of intercession

For our prayers of intercession, let's use a simple response. When I say: God of unending love, would you join me in replying: **Bring your healing, bring your peace**

God of unending love,

Bring your healing, bring your peace

We give you thanks for the witness and ministry of our church here in

We thank you for our ecumenical partners and for the work of the circuit and District.

We hear stories of new people returning to church and hope we join in your story of love and welcome.

Through your churches:

God of unending love,

Bring your healing, bring your peace

We lift our community to you.

The hurt and the challenges,

The joy and the pain.

May your wisdom be found in all who lead and govern,

Your joy found in our schools and community space,

Your hope found in the small acts of love and friendship offered daily.

We lift our community knowing many who are struggling with economics, war and poverty.

Each of these cause havoc in our community and those we are linked to around the world.

God of unending love,

Bring your healing, bring your peace

And we think of your world.

The people and places we may never meet,

Who feel forgotten and in pain,

Who need to see the workers in the vineyard of your love.

Picking the fruits of love and justice

So all may have a taste of security, peace and freedom.

God of unending love,

Bring your healing, bring your peace

⁴ Reflection written by John Cooper

Finally, we think of those nearest and dearest to us.

Sometimes whose closeness in relationship is there on paper yet lost in reality.
Others whose memories are fading and we forget their true self.
Into this silence we lift those people to you.

God of unending love,

Bring your healing, bring your peace

Amen.⁵

We will now take up the offering.

God of peace,

Today there is much conflict and violence in our world,

And yet much that we can do, to be people of peace – here and everywhere.

God of peace,

Show us how to use our gifts, and the gifts given here today, to help build communities of peace, by your grace,

Amen.⁶

Hymn:

323 STF – I will sing the wondrous story OR

561 STF – Now I have found the ground wherein sure my soul's anchor may remain

Blessing

Let us go out from here,

And follow in your way of grace and peace and love,

By the Spirit of God who goes with, before and beyond us.

Help us to join in with your story, today and everyday,

Amen.⁷

⁵ Prayers of intercession written by John Cooper

⁶ Additional prayers by Tim Baker

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker