

## SERMON

Luke 15:1-10

Our Father's Joy in Finding the Lost

Nunawading and Waverley, 11-9-22

Dear friends in Christ,

Our Lord Jesus has given us some parables about the Father's joy in finding **the lost**. We know about the joy of finding something lost, a lost set of keys, a purse or engagement ring. We lost one of children in the dense bush of Queensland for a whole day and tracker dogs, bush walkers, police, national park staff and a helicopter were sent in. How relieved and joyful we were to find our child safe and unharmed.

Each of us was once lost to God before he searched for us and found us, using baptism, the Holy Spirit, Christian parents, pastor, Christian friends and the whole congregation to find us. Our Father used a lot of resources to search for us, find us and then bring us close to him. We now belong to the group Jesus calls **the righteous**, that is, those who have received the Father's full love, perfection and forgiveness as free gifts, presents granted to us and received by faith. We are no longer lost because the Father has found us. All the other religions are sincere human attempts to find God yet Christianity is unique in that the Find comes down to search for us.

Jesus was attacked for being **a friend of tax-collectors and sinners**, associating with them and even eating with them, which looked like he was one of them. In a way, he was because he saw that that was his special mission **to seek and to save the lost**. Who are the lost today? Well, anyone who does not know Jesus Christ, the one who is fully God and fully human and has given himself to us, in the fullest way, so that we can know his love, be joined to him in a bond of eternal friendship and come into his glorious presence when he raises us from the dead. People can be lost in so many ways. A person can make a wrong choice in life that takes her down a path that leads to suffering and grief. Mixing with the wrong friends, being tempted to do something criminal, pushing yourself too hard and seeking perfection, beauty, fame and academic success, these are lost states. A materialistic life and concentrating on life-style will lead you into a dark corner even though everything seems so good and comfortable. **Having a 100 sheep**, in Jesus' parable meant that he was not talking about a shepherd but the owner of the sheep. He said this because the Pharisees, he talked to, cared more for business assets than a spiritually lost person. Hatred and seeking revenge, abusing substances and

false religious belief, all these things I have mentioned and others as well, lead people away from the God who loves them.

Our Father is seeking to find all these lost people and he will do anything he can to find them. As I said, the Father gave his Son, gave him away so that evil people murdered him on a cross. But this was his plan for his Son, to send him into the back streets, amongst beggars and then to confront the powerful, the rich, the church leaders and imperial governors. He was like the sheep owner, searching in the bushes and ravines for the lost sheep and like that lovely woman, **who swept he house thoroughly to find the lost coin**. Through the plotting and hatred of his enemies, the Father's huge cosmic project was being fulfilled, where all the stupidities of human beings, their greed and aggression, were being heaped on this one being, Jesus the Lord. He willingly made himself a criminal and sinner, sinking into the lowest place amongst human beings so that all the lost could be found and come close to him. Truly, he **was the friend of sinners**.

The Father has made an all-out effort to find the lost and that effort signifies how deep his love is and how precious we are to him. The woman's lost coin was probably the coin from her dowry, the price paid to her parents so that a young man could marry her. It was her badge of honour in effect. Do we see the lost in that way? Our response here is to ask the Holy Spirit to give us the same heart for the lost, for those who are different to us, foreign and not one of us. **The owner of the sheep placed the lost sheep on his shoulders and returned to his friends, rejoicing**. It is hard to think of a better image of our heavenly Father. He wants the lost to be intimate contact with him so that they can know him, experience his redemption, have hope, joy and peace and meaning for our lives. Let us see the lost, then, through the Father's eyes.

**Celebrate with me**, the lady told her friends and neighbours when she found her lost coin! The Spirit is calling on us not to judge or be shocked by someone's previous life and back-ground. Rather, the Holy Spirit calls on us to enter into the Father's joy when one lost person repents, comes to the Lord and is baptised. So often we are consumed by the hard work of keeping things going in the church and there seems to be few successes. Maybe there is a message here that our Lord Jesus wants us to focus on the lost, to seek them and create events that our friends would come to. For us **99 righteous ones**, we should be actively seeking this joy of seeing people come to Christ. That is God's mission and it is ours. Let us think seriously, then, at what really makes our Father happy.