



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2025 – 4 before Lent

COLLECT

Almighty God,
who called your Church to bear witness
that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:
help us to proclaim the good news of your love,
that all who hear it may be drawn to you;
through him who was lifted up on the cross,
and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 51. 1-11

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness; ♦
according to the abundance of your compassion
blot out my offences.
- 2 Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness ♦
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I acknowledge my faults ♦
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you only have I sinned ♦
and done what is evil in your sight,
- 5 So that you are justified in your sentence ♦
and righteous in your judgement.
- 6 I have been wicked even from my birth, ♦
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
- 7 Behold, you desire truth deep within me ♦
and shall make me understand wisdom
in the depths of my heart.
- 8 Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; ♦
wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, ♦
that the bones you have broken may rejoice.
- 10 Turn your face from my sins ♦
and blot out all my misdeeds.
- 11 Make me a clean heart, O God, ♦
and renew a right spirit within me.

A reading from Paul's first letter to Timothy, chapter 1, verses 12-17.

1 Timothy 1.12-17

I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 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. But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from Luke, chapter 15, verses 1-10.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel. Everywhere except Fitz introduces it with an Acclamation (the blue bit), and then we all use the introduction and ending (the green bit):

Alleluia. **Alleluia.**

I am the way, the truth and the life, says the Lord. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Luke, chapter 15, verses 1-10.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Luke 15.1-10

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

So he told them this parable: 'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

A Reflection from Dave

I suspect that a regular grumble for many of us at home is when we can't find the thing that we are looking for. We might begin with the confused "I'm sure my wallet was there just a minute ago!". But it can quickly become the grumble of "where has that stupid thing gone," and "why can't things just stay put!" It can be easy to get frustrated at the things that get lost.

Whilst the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin in our Gospel reading might be familiar to us, with both involving a search for that which is lost before rejoicing in that which is found, it is the context of grumbling into which Jesus told these stories that is worth considering.

Jesus had attracted a crowd of outcasts, tax collectors and sinners, and the religious leaders were watching and grumbling - "Why is Jesus mixing with these people? They can't stick to the rules. They are stuck doing the wrong things. Why get involved with these lost causes?" It was this grumbling that triggered Jesus to tell his parables, because the focus in both is not the act of finding, but the reaction to those who are found.

In each story the climax is when friends and neighbours gather for a joy-filled party because the lost cause has returned. The reaction is not to chastise the sheep for causing such bother, or to grumble about how the coin came to be missing. Instead there is simply shared joy that what was lost is now found. It is this joy that Jesus says mirrors the reaction of heaven to people who repent, who change direction and seek God despite their track record of sin. Jesus locates this joy in the presence of the angels, meaning that the joy finds its source in God himself.

This puts those religious leaders in a perilous position. Their reaction of grumbling about those who need to repent is out of step with God's joy in them actually repenting. He seeks and rejoices in lost causes, but what about them? And what about us?

If we can be quick to blame even inanimate objects for getting themselves lost, what about our reaction to those that our society treats as lost causes? Labels like asylum seeker, bed blocker, homeless, and criminal are all targeted at people who are displaced, whether by their own actions like the lost sheep, or by the actions of others like the lost coin. As a church, will we react by grumbling and avoiding them, like those religious leaders, or can the church cause the same level of shock that Jesus did, by mixing, seeking, and rejoicing in these, and many other, lost causes.