



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

13th Sunday after Trinity - 11th September 2022

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 572117 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

We are still asking people to be sensible and sensitive . Mask wearing is optional. Respect people's space. Washing hands is a good idea. Wine offered (for those wishing it). Dipping is not recommended.

~ Services with Social Distancing ~

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am ~ St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

St Wendreda's Sundays 11am

TOWN THANKSGIVING SERVICE for QUEEN ELIZABETH II
Friday 16th Sept ~ 4pm in St Peter's

Prayer, Collect, for this week

Undaunted you seek the lost, O God, exultant you bring home the found. Touch our hearts with grateful wonder at the tenderness of your forbearing love. Grant us delight in the mercy that has found us and bring all to rejoice at the feast of forgiveness. We ask through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

God of the dirtied hands, the wandering feet; you seek out the lost before they ever turn to you: take us with you into the abandoned places to find a new community outside our fortress walls; through Jesus Christ, the Searching One. Amen.

Old Testament Jeremiah 4 v11-12 & 22-28

At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot wind comes from me out of the bare heights in the desert towards my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse— a wind too strong for that. Now it is I who speak in judgement against them.

I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and lo, there was no one at all, and all the birds of the air had fled. I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger. For thus says the Lord: The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end. Because of this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above grow black; for I have spoken, I have purposed; I have not relented nor will I turn back.

Gospel of Luke 15 v1-10

All the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. 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.'

Meditation

The parable of the lost coin is the middle of a group of three – the lost sheep preceding, and the one following is the parable of the lost son(s), otherwise known as the prodigal son. It fits well with these others forming an extended reflection on being lost and found.

One of the questions about the background of this parable is the significance, or otherwise, of the silver coin. The drachma was a Greek silver coin worth the equivalent of the Roman denarius – the pay for about a day's labour for a man – a woman would have received less. Luke may have used "Drachma" rather than denarius so that his largely Greek speaking audience would understand the small value of the coin. An alternative is that the ten coins were special and an unusual collection of Greek coinage was not in everyday use, which led to the loss of one of them being more significant.

It was, for a while, fashionable to imagine that the coins were a form of bridal headdress from which hung ten coins. This would therefore lend the coin sentimental as well as economic value. However, it seems this belongs to a later tradition as there is no evidence of women wearing such headdresses at this time. This does not mean, however, that the coin was unimportant. The key seems to be that while we may not consider a drachma of great value, it was very important to her and therefore worth searching for. It might be that the choice of an everyday coin is exactly the point – it does not look much to us but to her it was of great value. Likewise, those who don't appear to us to be of great value are to God of supreme importance. Value is relative – just because something or someone looks unimportant it does not mean they are.

Is the woman God? One of the questions that emerges reading this parable is: who are we to understand the woman to be? Many people see the shepherd of the parable of the lost sheep as God and also the Father of the prodigal son as God. If this is the case then it also makes sense to see the woman as God! Much as I would like to cast the woman as God, my own view is that none of them "are" God. They illustrate a scenario featuring what would have been an everyday human situation at the time of Jesus – the loss of an animal, the loss of an object, the fracture of family relationships. The three parables ask us to reflect, if in this everyday scenario this is what happens, how much more is it the case when God seeks us?

There are two strands that come out of this parable. The first, just as in the parable of the lost sheep, is the importance of celebration. In this case an all-female celebration – the friends and neighbours summoned by the woman were all female – we know this because the ending is feminine plural – if there had been any men among them, the ending would have been masculine plural. The focus is on the value of that which is lost and the joy caused by it being found. Again this reminds us that Jesus' eating with tax collectors and sinners was, in his view, the equivalent of a grand party – a celebration reflecting the joy in heaven experienced by finding those who have been lost.

The second strand focuses on the care the woman takes in searching for the lost coin. It is worth noting that Galilean houses in this period were built with very little natural light (some were even carved into caves in the side of mountains) to help regulate heat. Lighting a lamp would have allowed the woman to see into corners of the house that would normally remain in darkness even in the middle of the day. What communicates the value of the coin to us is the care the woman took in searching for it. As with the lost sheep the overwhelming message of the parable is of the value to Jesus of tax collectors and sinners and the extent of the celebration he had when they were "found".

The everyday objects chosen by Jesus in these and some other parables are about as ordinary as they could be, ranging from clothes with holes in them to bread; from lights and food measures to small cheap coins. It is tempting when we think about God and God's kingdom to choose more significant items – fine churches or cathedrals or elaborate artwork or icons – but Jesus used whatever lay easily to hand. Nothing was too ordinary or cheap. One of the themes that comes through so strongly from his parables is his treasuring of the ordinary and everyday.

One of the key features of Jesus' teaching is that things did not need to be treated differently for them to be holy; they did not need to be elaborate or expensive for them to convey the kingdom; they did not need to be kept in a special place for them to communicate the things of God. In exactly the same way, people were equally valued no matter how society viewed or treated them. Right at the heart of Jesus' message was the belief that everyone – no matter who they were, where they had come from or what they had done – was valued simply because they were valuable. Nothing and no one was ever too ordinary for God.

And that is a cause for real celebration, and a deep celebration to be shared with all around us.

God bless, Andrew

Prayers

Gracious God, we give thanks
for the life of your servant Queen Elizabeth,
for her faith and her dedication to duty.
Bless our nation as we mourn her death
and may her example continue to inspire us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of love,
We thank you for the life of The Queen,
for her service to our nation, and for her faith in you.
Be close to all of us who mourn,
that we may find comfort and hope in your love,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Everlasting God, we pray for our new King.
Bless his reign and the life of our nation.
Help us to work together
so that truth and justice, harmony and fairness
flourish among us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Litany of Thanksgiving

As we mourn the death of Elizabeth our Queen, let us give thanks to God in faith and trust. For the gift of Christ Jesus and for all whose devotion to him has sustained the life of our Church and nation:

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

For Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and all the Royal Family; for the ministers of the Crown and all who bear the privilege and burden of government:

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

For all people touched by Queen Elizabeth's devotion to public service:

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

For our own lives, giving thanks for all those who have gone before, and asking that we might go forward with confidence and hope:

Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.

O God,
in whom we live and move and have our being, grant that your goodness and mercy shall follow us
all the days of our lives, that we may ever trust in your unfailing love;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.