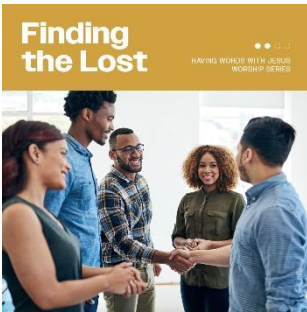


*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.*

*May we together experience the presence of God*

+++++

***We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord***



**Prelude**

**Welcome**

**Announcements/Joys & Concerns**

There is more to our faith than believing.  
As disciples we are to live out our faith each day.  
And we do that through evangelism.

The thought of Evangelism frightens many of us. Why? Because when we think of evangelism, many times what comes to our minds is a preacher on a street corner with a bullhorn, encouraging people to repent of their sins. Or perhaps we think of a total stranger who confronts us with the question, "Have you been saved?" Too often the focus of evangelism is that of aggressive people making others feel very uncomfortable.

Reaching out to lost people was a high priority for Jesus. He declared, "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." We will see that clearly in today's text. A shepherd has 100 sheep. One is lost. He leaves behind the 99 to go in search of the one lost sheep. This is followed by another similar parable about a woman losing a coin. Seeking the lost seems to be a central theme here in Luke.

What Jesus wants us to understand is that Evangelism is more than making sure St. Peter welcomes you through the pearly gates. It is encouraging others to experience God, the goodness of God, now, in this life. It is our faith that give us meaning and purpose in life; it is our faith that helps us through hard times, it is our faith that motivates us to serve other; it is our faith that grounds us.

That does not mean faith will make life a joy ride, that everything is hunky-dory. It does not mean we can do-little and sit-more. Faith helps us through the twists and turns and bumps of life. There will be stress; there will be anxiety; there will be pain; there will be grief. And that is exactly why we need God.

Evangelism is nothing more than sharing with others what brings meaning and purpose in our lives, sharing with others what is important in our lives. The themes of joy and celebration are paramount in the two stories about a lost

sheep and a lost coin. Each of these stories end with a celebration. The shepherd calls his friends and neighbors to celebrate his finding the one lost sheep. The woman also invites her friends and neighbors to celebrate finding the one lost coin. Each story ends with a statement that there will be joy in heaven. That is the call of evangelism, so that others may join in the celebration of God's love and grace.

Understanding evangelism as inviting others to celebrate God's goodness and grace helps us realize that evangelism does not need to be confrontational.

Let me assure you that I will not ask that any of you go up to a total stranger and ask them if they are saved. I don't know if that has ever happened to you, but it has to me. And it is a bit intimidating.

Evangelism is relational. Evangelism is not a sales pitch or pressuring people or annoying them. It is sharing with them the good life that God offers now. All of us can find opportunities to share our faith naturally with people that we know. It can be as simple as letting folks know that our faith is important to us. That our faith grounds us, give us meaning and purpose, helps us through hard times, and motivates us to serve others. Let me say this again - Evangelism is not confrontational; it is relational, and it is invitational.

The most common form of invitational witness is to invite people to church for worship, or a church dinner, or to sing in the choir, or some special event in the life of the church. Simply put evangelism is inviting others to celebrate God's goodness and grace through your daily actions, deeds, and conversations. No pressure, no confrontation, no bullhorns just being yourself and having the confidence to let God's light shine through you.

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

(inspired by Luke 15:1-10)

God calls to the lost, the least, and all who long for home;  
**God calls when we wander from the path chosen for us  
and waste the gifts we have been given.**

God calls and welcomes us back to worship this day;  
**let us celebrate and rejoice in God's presence forever;**  
let us worship God together.

## **GENERAL PRAYER**

**Holy God: We give you thanks and praise for the beauty of this day and for all the promise it offers. We thank you for life, for joy, for every opportunity to walk with you as children of the light. Cleanse our hearts and give us a new heart like the shepherd who left the ninety-nine to go looking for the one, whose heart was full of joy when he found it, who celebrated and put the lost sheep on his shoulders because he was so happy to have found it. Help us to find our greatest joy in the finding of the lost. Help us to remember, and perhaps to know for the first time, the joy that comes from being lost and then being found by your love and grace. In Jesus name we pray. Amen**

**\*HYMN OF PRAISE UMH #378 “Amazing Grace!” (verse 1-4)**

Author: John Newton (1779)

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<http://www.gbod3.org/sorter/audio/378.mp3>

**1 Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.**

**2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to  
fear, and grace my fears relieved;  
how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed!**

**3 Through many dangers, toils and  
snares  
I have already come:  
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.**

**4 The Lord has promised good to me,  
his word my hope secures;  
he will my shield and portion be  
as long as life endures.**

***We Hear God's Word***

**Gospel Reading..... Luke 15:1-10  
New Revised Standard Version**

***The Parable of the Lost Sheep***

*15 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.*

*2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying,  
“This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*

*3 So he told them this parable: 4 “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? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.’ 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

***The Parable of the Lost Coin***

*8 “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? 9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ 10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

The Word of God for the People of God, **Thanks be to God!**

**CHILDREN'S SERMON**

**FAITH HYMN UMH #381 “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”**

Author (attr.): Dorothy A. Thrupp (1836)

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<http://www.gbod3.org/sorter/audio/381.mp3>

**1 Savior, like a shepherd lead us,  
Much we need Thy tender care;  
In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,  
For our use Thy folds prepare:  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are;  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.**

**2 We are Thine, do Thou befriend us,  
Be the guardian of our way;  
Keep Thy flock, from sin defend us,  
Seek us when we go astray:  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Hear, O hear us when we pray;  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Hear, O hear us when we pray.**

**3 Thou hast promised to receive us,  
Poor and sinful though we be;  
Thou hast mercy to relieve us,  
Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free:  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Early let us turn to Thee;  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Early let us turn to Thee.**

**4 Early let us seek Thy favor,  
Early let us do Thy will;  
Blessed Lord and only Savior,  
With Thy love our bosoms fill:  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Thou hast loved us, love us still;  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Thou hast loved us, love us still**

### **“Message”**

#### **Pastoral prayer for the anniversary of 9/11**

God of grace and God of glory, on this anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, grant us the wisdom to remember the lessons from that tragic day that make us more Christ-like. Drive away from us any vengeful urges, any hate-filled sentiment, any whisper from within or without that goads us to return evil for evil.

As we look back and recall where we were, who was with us and how we felt that fateful day, may those vivid memories compel us to acts of kindness, words of love and demonstrations of community. May the myriad of images of helpers – firefighters, police officers, pastors, office workers, ordinary citizens – be the icons that inspire us to be helpers, too. May texts and voicemails of “I love you” and “You are everything to me” assure us that love always has the last word, but that we should never wait to say it.

We pray for those whose lives were forever changed on September 11, 2001. Grant comfort to those who grieve. Strengthen those who struggle with questions that remain unanswered.

We thank you, Lord of all, for the people who every day put their lives in danger in order to protect and serve others. We pray for all first responders, for medical personnel, police officers, firefighters and others who never know what a shift at work will bring on any given day. Grant them wisdom, courage and rest.

We are grateful for the new life born since the attacks – for those beloved children who don't remember that day. We give thanks for the saints who were with us then but have since gone on to eternal life.

When we mark anniversaries of sorrow, corporately or alone, may they be occasions to discern what truly matters, let go of what really doesn't and recognize your grace, Almighty God, that pervades it all.

In the name of Jesus, the light of the world, the Prince of Peace, the Good Shepherd, our friend and our helper, we pray using the words that Jesus taught us.  
Our Father...

## **Offertory & Doxology (UM Hymnal 95)**

**(Wykoff only)**

### **Offertory Prayer**

*God of relentless love, the Gospel reminds us of the joy you feel when one of your children chooses the path of repentance and redemption. We picture the celebration in your heart when that choice is made. We also know how prone we are to wander off that path as we pursue those things that satisfy ourselves only. Receive the gifts we offer this day as a sign of our striving to get back on the path that leads us to you. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, the light on our path! Amen. (Luke 15:1-10)*

### **Departing Hymn UMH #671 "Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing"**

*Author: John Fawcett (1773)*

*Publication Date: 1989*

*Tune Information*

*Name: SICILIAN MARINERS*

*Meter: 87.87.87*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIIAJHoO1FA>

**1. Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing;  
fill our hearts with joy and peace;  
let us each, thy love possessing,  
triumph in redeeming grace.  
O refresh us, O refresh us,  
traveling through this wilderness.**

**2. Thanks we give and adoration  
for thy gospel's joyful sound.  
May the fruits of thy salvation  
in our hearts and lives abound;  
ever faithful, ever faithful  
to the truth may we be found.**

### **Benediction**

May we who have been found by the grace and overwhelming love of God, now become those who seek with grace and joy. Go into your world with open eyes and longing hearts. And may the peace of God resonate in every invitation and every welcome. Amen.

**\*POSTLUDE**