

9/14/25
14th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from September 7th – September 13th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: O God, overflowing with mercy and compassion, you lead back to yourself all those who go astray. Preserve your people in your loving care, that we may reject whatever is contrary to you and may follow all things that sustain our life in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER

Share: How did last week's scripture (Luke 14:1, 7-14) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Luke 14:25-33

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What are the Pharisees complaining about?
2. What do these two parables teach us about the character of God?
3. What do the shepherd and the woman have in common?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Share a story when persistence paid off.
2. When have you felt "lost" from God recently? Who or what helped you bridge the distance?
3. Share a story of time you felt particularly noticed or valued.

Memorize this verse: "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'" (Luke 15:6) What are you rejoicing about this week?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 1. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

Narrative time bombs. That's what the late great author and pastor Eugene Peterson once described parables as, and I think he's right. Which is what can make reading and preaching them so vexing. We want to explain parables, usually reading them either as analogies to be decoded or puzzles to be solved. Either way, we try to tame them, even domesticate them, when all along parables favor detonation over explanation. The closest thing in our experience to a parable is probably a riddle, something that takes a little figuring out, but whose real meaning can't be reduced to an equation, usually sneaks up on you, and almost always has something of a kick to it. Which means that more often than not, it's only a while after you've read a parable that it really hits you, setting off a series of possibilities and experiences you couldn't have imagined when you first read it.

What struck me reading these familiar parables was not simply the unlikeliness of God acting in unlikely ways in the name of love but also the sheer, even ridiculous extravagance of these actions. A shepherd who knows very well that a 1% loss of investment is, in the larger scheme, no big deal, but who goes on a wild goose chase (or, I guess, wild sheep chase) in the hope of bringing that one percent back. Or what about that woman who stays up all night sweeping, hoping to find a coin that isn't all that significant in the grand scheme of things. Interestingly, I'd always assumed that she only had ten coins, which might offer a more plausible rationale of her effort at recouping 10% of her property (though still not explain the expense for the party). But what if she isn't poor but simply happens to have ten coins at home at the moment? I mean, if she's a homeowner she's not impoverished and that would explain the nonchalance with which she invites and entertains her neighbors. It's no big deal; she can afford it. But then why the long search? Because that's just what she's like. She doesn't want to lose any of her coins. Or, better, what if that's what God is like – needing nothing, but whose eternal and infinite being is love. Love that will not let anyone go and so searches and sweeps until finding even the most insignificant and, upon finding them (us!), parties like there's no tomorrow?

Among other things, these parables challenge our dominant image of God. If we imagine God as a ruler, then these losses are negligible. But if we see God instead as a parent, then the extravagance is understandable. I mean, I can't think of anything I wouldn't do for my children and those I love. This is why I'm grateful for these parables. Because there is so much in life that conspires to make us feel like we don't matter, at least not very much, and that we don't hold any particular value or significance. And yet these narrative time bombs remind us that God believes we matter that we each have value, are significant, and are worthy of attention, dignity, and love.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen