

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

Have mercy on me God, in your kindness.

Psalm

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength.

Second Reading

Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt:
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. *Second Reading*

This son of mine was dead and has come back to life;
he was lost and is found!

Gospel

Almighty God, our creator and guide,
may we serve you with all our heart
and know your forgiveness in our lives.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:
Exodus 32: 7–11.13–14; Psalm 50 (51); 1 Tim. 1: 12–17; Luke 15: 1–32

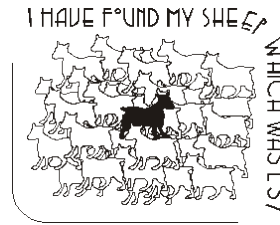
Sieger Köder, *Der gute Hirte*



'Rejoice
with me!
I have
found
my sheep
that was
lost.'

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ST. BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year C, 15th September 2019

There will be rejoicing
in heaven over
one repentant sinner

This week's readings invite us to rejoice in a God who longs to forgive us. No-one is beyond God's reach: we are loved sinners who are welcomed home with great joy, regardless of how far we have strayed.

In the **First Reading** the Israelites have lost faith both in Moses and in God himself, and are worshipping an idol – the golden calf that they have made. But God listens to Moses's pleading and forgives them.

The **Psalm** shows that whatever crisis we may face in our relationship with God, his mercy ensures we can always find a way back to him.

The **Second Reading** speaks of the mercy of God from first-hand experience. Paul is the 'greatest of sinners', once set on persecuting the followers of Jesus, but now God's grace has filled him with love and faithfulness, and his response is one of gratitude and loving service.

In the **Gospel** extract, Jesus tells three parables about seeking the lost, and the joy when they are found. He compares God's unfailing mercy to a shepherd searching out the one stray in a flock of ninety-nine; to a woman who drops everything to look for a lost coin; and to the father who watches out for his 'prodigal' son and runs out joyfully to meet him. (Though this last parable isn't included in the text of the Prego, it is well worth savouring its wonderful message if there is time.)

This week, let's ask God to help us become ever more deeply aware of his love and compassion, and his desire to forgive the penitent sinner. Wherever and whatever our circumstances, God will always seek us out.

Opening Prayer

Look upon us, O God,
Creator and ruler of all things,
and, that we may feel the working of your mercy,
grant that we may serve you with all our heart.

Second Reading 1 Timothy 1: 12–17

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, and who judged me faithful enough to call me into his service even though I used to be a blasphemer and did all I could to injure and discredit the faith. Mercy, however, was shown me, because until I became a believer I had been acting in ignorance; and the grace of our Lord filled me with faith and with the love that is in Christ Jesus. Here is a saying that you can rely on and nobody should doubt: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I myself am the greatest of them; and if mercy has been shown to me, it is because Jesus Christ meant to make me the greatest evidence of his inexhaustible patience for all the other people who would later have to trust in him to come to eternal life. To the eternal King, the undying, invisible and only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

As I settle to pray, I take time to bring myself consciously into the Lord's presence. I can trust that he is here, always waiting to welcome me. I ask to respond with openness and generosity.

In time, I read these words slowly and carefully, more than once. I may like to imagine them being read aloud by the writer of the letter.

I pause to savour anything that seems to draw my attention.

Though the author has a strong sense of his own sinfulness, this has in no way prevented God from calling him on to a life of loving, faithful service. I ponder this.

As I look back, in what ways has God worked in my own life – or in that of someone I know? Maybe this has sometimes been in a different way from what I expected? I notice how I feel about this now.

Perhaps I think of ways in which God has been 'inexhaustibly patient' in showing mercy to me in the past ... or I may want to seek his forgiveness right now.

I share openly with the Lord, and ask for any grace I need.

When I am ready, I slowly prepare to take my leave, asking God to 'fill me with faith, and the love that is in Christ Jesus'.

I end my prayer with a slow sign of the cross, giving thanks.

Gospel Luke 15: 1–32 (part)

The tax collectors and the sinners, meanwhile, were all seeking Jesus's company to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man', they said, 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them:

'What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," he would say, "I have found my sheep that was lost." In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance.

'Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," she would say "I have found the drachma I lost." In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.'

I take time to come to inner stillness, trusting that I am in the presence of a loving, compassionate God who accepts me exactly as I am.

When ready, I turn prayerfully to the text, perhaps imagining myself standing with the 'sinners' who have come to seek out Jesus. I watch and listen, noticing anything that touches me. How do I feel?

Both parables describe the joy as the lost are found: the joy of the shepherd; of the whole community; and finally of heaven itself. I ponder ... (and I may like to notice how this joy is depicted by the artist on the back page).

If I can, I allow *myself* to be the object of God's joy for a while, and simply rest in his gaze.

What are the things that bring me most joy in my life? To whom would I like to bring joy myself? I share my thoughts and feelings with the Lord.

Before I end my prayer, I call to mind anyone whom I would specially like God to seek out and bring home, and lift them up to him now.

As I gently bring my prayer to a close, I give thanks to the Lord who rejoices in forgiving. *Glory be ...*