

Sermon by Joshva 14-Sep-25

Texts: 1 Timothy 1:12–17; Luke 15:1–10

Theme: *Grace That Finds the Lost — People and Creation*

Introduction

In God's kingdom, no one is excluded. That is the heartbeat of today's readings. We meet a God who will not accept that anyone—or anything—should remain lost. Whether it is Paul the persecutor, a sheep gone astray, or a coin rolled under the furniture, God searches until the lost are restored.

And when restoration happens, there is joy—on earth and in heaven. Creation itself joins in that rejoicing, because when one life is rescued, the harmony of the whole is renewed.

Let me begin with a picture.

In some Indian cities during drought, water is supplied for only two hours in the morning. Families gather with all their pots, waiting eagerly to catch every drop. One woman placed her pots carefully under the tap. She heard the sound of water falling—but something was wrong. When she looked, she saw the pot under the tap was upside down. The water was not filling it; it was only splashing on top and making noise.

Friends, our Christian lives can sometimes be like that pot. We may create plenty of noise about faith—through our words, our prayers, even our singing—but if our hearts are not turned the right way up, if our lives are not truly open to God, then Christ's living water cannot fill us. Today's gospel challenges us not just to make a noise about faith, but to be filled, transformed, and to follow Jesus with our whole lives.

1. Paul's Testimony: Grace Overflowing (1 Timothy 1:12–17)

Paul begins with honesty. He names himself as a blasphemer, persecutor, and violent man. He wasn't just indifferent to the gospel; he was actively destructive. If anyone was "lost," it was Paul.

Yet he does not end in despair. He says: *"But I received mercy... and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me."* That word "overflowed" matters—it suggests abundance, like floodwaters spilling over a riverbank. Grace was not given sparingly; it was poured out lavishly.

Paul's life is proof that no one is beyond God's reach. If God can transform a persecutor into an apostle, then there is hope for us all—hope for every broken heart, every weary soul, and even for creation itself, which groans under human neglect.

2. The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin: A God Who Searches (Luke 15:1–10)

Jesus tells these parables in response to critics who said: *"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."* His answer is simple: God does not discard the lost. God searches.

The shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to find the one. From a human perspective, it seems reckless—why risk so many for just one? But from God's perspective, every life has infinite value. The shepherd becomes the means of rescue, venturing into thorny bushes and dangerous paths to lift up the sheep that cannot return on its own.

Likewise, the woman sweeps her house diligently until she finds her coin. And when she does, she calls her neighbours to rejoice with her.

Some cannot rescue themselves. Some are trapped in shame, grief, or despair. But God does not wait for them to find their way back. God takes the extra steps—searching, lifting, carrying. And when the lost are restored, there is joy in heaven. Not judgment. Not resentment. Joy.

Here's another image. A father gave his daughter a puzzle of the world map. She surprised him by completing it very quickly. "How did you do it?" he asked. She replied: *"On the back was a picture of a human face. I thought, if I could put the person together, then the world would come together too."*

That is wisdom. When our lives are scattered—our values confused, our hopes fractured—the world around us feels broken too. Jesus calls us to wholeness, to be put back together in him, even the lost pieces of our lives: our doubts, our failures, our griefs.

3. The Wider Horizon: Creation's Lost Ones

Creationtide widens our vision. These parables are not only about people; they reveal God's heart for all creation.

Think of the earth itself as "lost" in many ways: forests cut down, rivers polluted, species endangered, soils stripped bare. Like the sheep, creation cannot rescue itself. The wounds caused by human greed and carelessness run deep.

Yet the same God who searches for the lost sheep longs to restore creation. The shepherd does not say, *"This one doesn't matter."* The woman does not shrug, *"It's only a small loss."* So too, in God's kingdom, no part of creation is too small or insignificant to be cherished.

And Paul's testimony speaks again: if God's overflowing grace could transform him from enemy to servant, then grace can transform us from exploiters of creation into its caretakers and healers.

4. Joy in Heaven and on Earth

Both parables end with joy. The shepherd calls his friends to celebrate. The woman invites her neighbours to rejoice. And Jesus says: *"There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents."*

God rescues not grudgingly but gladly. When the lost are found, heaven rejoices—and creation rejoices too. As the psalmist says, *"Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice... let the trees of the field clap their hands"* (Psalm 96; Isaiah 55).

Imagine the joy when polluted waters run clear, when forests return, when species are protected, when the earth breathes again. That joy belongs not only to heaven, but to earth itself.

5. The Lost Among Us: Our Young People

Friends, when Jesus spoke of the lost sheep and the lost coin, he was also speaking about us—our families, our communities, and especially our young people today.

Many of them feel lost. Some feel unheard within their families. Some struggle to find belonging in their communities. Many wrestle with questions of meaning: *“Why am I here? What difference can I make? Where do I belong?”* Others carry wounds of rejection, failure, or comparison in a world of constant pressure.

And the truth is, some cannot rescue themselves. Like the sheep caught in thorns, or the coin hidden in the dust, they need someone to search for them, to carry them, to affirm them.

Here the parable speaks powerfully: the shepherd becomes the means of rescue. God often works through us—parents, mentors, teachers, friends, churches—to offer words of comfort, affirmation, and guidance.

This is our calling: to echo God’s searching love, to walk with our young people in their struggles, to remind them: *“You are not forgotten. You are not worthless. You are deeply loved.”*

And when a young person discovers meaning and hope again, there is joy—in the family, in the community, and in heaven itself.

Conclusion

Paul ends with a doxology: *“To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever.”*

That is our song too. Friends, in God’s kingdom, none is excluded. The shepherd goes after the lost sheep. The woman searches for the missing coin. The Creator seeks out the wounded places of the world. And when the lost are found—whether it is a person, a community, or creation itself—there is joy in heaven and on earth.

So let us live as people of grace—found, forgiven, and transformed—and let us join God’s great search: rescuing the lost, healing creation, and lifting up the next generation with hope.

Amen.