

Risking All for the Lost

St Peter's

11 September 2022

Reading: Luke 15:1-10

Faithful God

Open the Scriptures to us in a fresh and exciting way

In Jesus name we ask it

Amen

Have you ever risked everything to go after one lost thing? Today Jesus tells us of two people doing just that. Such is the Shepherd's love for the lost sheep that he suspends common sense, lets the 99 fend for themselves and goes searching for the one that is lost.

And he tells us of a woman who loses a valuable coin. A small sugar lump shaped Palestinian home would have been badly lit. The only light being from the doorway in. Even a lamp would only give a small amount of light. The only way to find the coin would have been to sweep the floor. Again, the joy at finding it overwhelms logic because the party at finding it would have cost more than the coin is worth!

Risking all for the lost is not just a theme of today's reading but all of Luke's gospel. But what would a modern story of risking all for the lost look like?

Jack was fighting in the trenches and his friend lay beyond the trench in no man's land seriously injured. Night and day his friend called out, he called out for water, he called out for rescue, all the time drawing closer to death. Jack's officer, although Jack had asked him repeatedly, refused to give him permission to go and rescue his friend. "It's too dangerous" he said. "I forbid it." But Jack could stand it no longer. He quickly climbed up over the trench and ran to his friend. By the time he had hoisted him on his shoulder and run back to cover, his friend was dead, and Jack also had received a mortal wound. The officer was furious. "I told you not to go" he yelled. "Now I have lost you both. But tell me," he asked softly, "was it worth it?" "Yes," said Jack "because when I got to him, he said, "Thank you Jack, I knew you would come."

Risking all for the lost.

We may not have lost a sheep, a coin, or a comrade but all of us make choices every day to include or exclude the lost. Often in very simple ways.

John McLister, a former curate here, told me the story of how he became Christian.

He was a very rough looking, (he still looks a bit rough to be honest) student. He'd heard about Christianity and wanted to see if there was anything to it. In his torn jeans and smelly student clothes he arrived late to a Pentecostal service that was having a guest preacher. The church was packed with standing room only. The only seat in the whole place a kindly

old gentleman showed him to. Odd, he thought to himself, the chair is still warm. It wasn't until the sermon that he realized what had happened. The kindly old gentleman was in fact the guest preacher. He had given up his own seat for a smelly student who was desperately late. That had a profound impact on John, and he soon was to become a Christian.

Our new king, when he was the Prince of Wales, worked hard for those lost to racism and poverty in the inner cities. Helping the lost was the motivation behind the Prince's Trust.

This congregation has often risked a lot for the lost too. Twenty-two years ago, a group from St Peter's and other churches in the area established Petersgate, designed to offer affordable counseling to those that otherwise couldn't afford it. Today it sees thousands of people every year who would otherwise be lost to find a place to process their depression or anxiety or cares.

Three years ago today, St Peter's again risked a lot for the lost. This time it was the lost generation, the generation that has no idea about God's love. Together we opened the St Peter's Anglican preschool. Which offers a Christian start for families who may not even have heard of Jesus.

Lost sheep, lost coins, lost friends on the battlefield, people in need of counseling, children in need of a Christian preschool.

But the point of all is to highlight Jesus' message all those years ago. Colin Gibson, a Dunedin hymn writer, puts it better than me. His hymn goes like this:

**How Much Am I worth? What value's in me?
Do I count if I stand or I fall?
If I'm weak or I'm strong, If I win or I lose,
am I someone or no one at all?**

Refrain:

**I am worth ev'ry-thing, ev'ry thing, ev'ry-thing,
I am worth ev'ry-thing in the eyes of God.
I am worth ev'ry-thing, ev'ry thing, ev'ry-thing,
I am worth ev'ry-thing in the eyes of God.
You are worth ev'ry-thing, ev'ry thing, ev'ry-thing,
we are worth ev'ry-thing in the eyes of God.
You are worth ev'ry-thing, ev'ry thing, ev'ry-thing,
we are worth ev'ry-thing in the eyes of God.**

**I am that bird that dropped to the ground,
the tiniest bird of them all,
and nobody knew, and nobody cared,
but our Father who cares for us all.**

Refrain

I am that stone that fell from a ring,
that was precious beyond all compare;
and they hunted the house, till they cried out with joy,
when they saw it still gleaming down there.

Refrain

I am that child who felt lost and afraid
when she saw just how far she had roamed;
but they scoured the hills till they found her again,
and, rejoicing they brought her safe home.

Refrain

How much am I worth? Do I matter at all?
When I'm thinking it through may I see
that I'm worth all the love of the Son of God,
who laid down his life just for me.

Out of love, God risks everything for you and me, and that's the Good News.