

Sunday, September 14, 2025—Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

The grumbling of the religious leaders in today's gospel is actually our holy hope: This Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. That our God seeks and saves the lost is not only a holy hope, it is our only hope. As the writer of 1 Timothy reminds us, "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Thanks be to God.

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.

First Reading: Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

¹¹ At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem: A hot wind comes from me out of the bare heights in the desert toward my poor people, not to winnow or cleanse—¹² a wind too strong for that. Now it is I who speak in judgment against them.

²² "For my people are foolish,
they do not know me;
they are stupid children,
they have no understanding.
They are skilled in doing evil,
but do not know how to do good."

²³ I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void;
and to the heavens, and they had no light.

²⁴ I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking,
and all the hills moved to and fro.

²⁵ I looked, and lo, there was no one at all,
and all the birds of the air had fled.

²⁶ I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert,
and all its cities were laid in ruins
before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

²⁷ For thus says the LORD: The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end.

²⁸ Because of this the earth shall mourn,
and the heavens above grow black;

for I have spoken, I have purposed;
I have not relented nor will I turn back.

Psalm 14

¹ Fools say in their hearts, “There is no God.”

They are corrupt, every deed is vile; there is no one who does any good.

² **The LORD looks down from heaven upon us all,
to see if there is anyone who is wise, who seeks after God.**

³ They have all proved faithless; all alike have turned bad;
there is none who does good; no, not one.

⁴ **Have they no knowledge, all those evildoers
who eat up my people like bread and do not call upon the LORD?**

⁵ See how they tremble with fear,
because God is in the company of the righteous.

⁶ **Your aim is to confound the plans of the afflicted,
but the LORD is their refuge.**

⁷ Oh, that Israel’s deliverance would come out of Zion!

When the LORD restores the fortunes of the people, Jacob will rejoice and Israel will be glad.

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

¹² I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, ¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gospel: Luke 15:1-10

¹ Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] 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 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 sheep that was lost.' 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.

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 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."

Prayers and introductions from
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Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, we come to you in prayer for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Merciful God, pour out your grace upon your church. Forgive us for the times when we have been unfaithful, and renew our commitment to your gospel of love. Empower us to live as a community of mercy. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Merciful God, we ask forgiveness for the ways we have neglected and harmed this earth and its creatures. Confirm our commitment to care for all you have made, and grant us wisdom and strength to take action toward restoring your creation to its fullness. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Merciful God, govern all who hold positions of power and authority. Instruct them to make just decisions that serve the common good. Make them instruments of your mercy in the world, working to heal divisions and promote peace. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Merciful God, we lift up all who suffer. Bring healing, comfort, and peace to those who are sick, grieving, or in pain. Give us compassionate hearts to accompany those who are hurting and courage to work for justice and mercy. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Merciful God, bind us together as a community of forgiveness and love. Supply us with humility to seek forgiveness when we have wronged one another and generosity to extend mercy when we have been wronged. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Merciful God, we remember in love those who have departed this life. Console those who mourn, and give them the hope of resurrection. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

We entrust these prayers to you, O God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our redeemer and friend.

Amen.

Reflection

Lost and Found

Today's readings give witness that God has a heart for losers. God reconciles with the idol-worshipping people of Israel. The risen Lord calls the violent, blasphemous persecutor, Paul. The faithful shepherd rescues the wandering sheep and carries it home. The woman who lost one of her ten silver coins searches for it until she finds it. Similarly, God doesn't abandon people even when people abandon God. The cross and resurrection testify to God's faithfulness in that regard. God rescues strays one by one, making the first move to find the lost and create new hearts in them. When (in the first reading) Moses holds God to promises already made in the covenant, the breathtaking picture emerges of a God so committed to relationship that God is influenced—changed—by what people need and ask. This faithfulness of God, shared with overflowing grace in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus, is patient, forgiving, energetic, and ready to celebrate. Take the bread and cup—Jesus hosts the worshiping assembly again this week to welcome sinners and eat with them! Suddenly, "sinner" is no longer the best name for us. Try "guest," "graced," "gifted," "loved," and "empowered." Then it's time to follow Jesus out of the gathered assembly and into the world as apprentice sleuths for missing persons, bent on finding the lost and the broken and giving them an invitation to come home.



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