

Luke 15: 1 – 10

'Lostness in 2022'

### Introduction ...

Those 2 parables: The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin ... What are they about ... who are they about?

The obvious interpretation that we might be tempted to make is that they are about other people. We've gathered here ... we must be the 99 sheep or the 9 coins.

And there is some truth in that ... we've already had the confession within the service – we've already repented ... but it is not the whole story:

### God's Remarkable Mathematics ...

So I wonder with whom you might identify in the first parable – the parable of the Lost Sheep ... it might be the **1** – the lost one – and I'll come back to that later ... it might be **the Shepherd** – if you're concerned about someone – family member or friend ... or it might be the **99** ...

Whichever – whoever ... what do you make of the figures – the numbers ...

One New Testament scholar – Gerd Theissen – writes that this parable should really have a different title. Not: "The Parable of the Lost Sheep" but rather **God's Remarkable Mathematics ...** Leaving the **99** to search for the **1**.

Maybe it's not quite as it seems. Do you remember the story at the birth of Jesus – the angels came ... not to one shepherd – but to shepherds ... plural. So possibly there was an assumption of teamwork between shepherds. We can't be sure.

Going back to Gerd Theissen – after suggesting his change of title to **God's Remarkable Mathematics** he goes on to say that, even as a child, the parable irritated him ... what about the other **99** sheep ... did they not matter ... who looked after them? And now – as an adult, he might use a different story to explain it – especially to those asking the same questions.

The story is this:

***There's a small country ... a little Kingdom in Europe. And when you cross its border in a car, you are given a little folder. Inside is a statement in a big, bold typeface:***

***Our Kingdom is very small***

***We don't have many citizens***

***Each one of them is greatly valued and much needed***

***So we have introduced a strict speed limit of 20 mph throughout the Kingdom***

A country operating in such a way has understood God's mathematics well:

Each one precious

And better to cause some inconvenience to all than risk major injury or loss of life to one

Apply ...

PTO

That's a perspective, those are the mathematical principles that could underpin our decisions – as a church, as a family, as a society:

Each one precious

And better to cause some inconvenience to all than risk major injury or loss of life to one

Injuries are not always physical – they can be mental, spiritual, emotional.

But most of all – these are parables about God and God's love – particularly God's love for the 'lost.'

In 2022, in our own country as well as elsewhere – there is much 'lost-ness' about ... each of us may be feeling this for different reasons.

#### **Lostness ...**

- about what we'll be able to do and when  
partly still because of the pandemic and partly because of strain on finance
- about the future of our planet and whether or not we'll learn to live sustainably

Lostness about:

the state of the NHS

or the price of fuel

We can feel lost ... estranged from where we were 5 years ago – especially following the death of Queen Elizabeth.

At a time when leadership in Israel had failed, this message came from God through **Ezekiel chapter 34**

#### **Thus says the Lord God:**

**I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out ...**

**I will feed them with good pasture ...**

**I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak**

**I will provide for them.**

We have, I think, many crises of leadership within our world ... within our country ... be that in business, in politics, in popular culture ... and now the loss of our Queen too.

Let's pray for God to raise up leaders with integrity as well as skill, and to continue to equip our new King for his role, and let's constantly and confidently turn to God in any lostness we feel as individuals to allow God to find us, embrace us and bring us home.

Amen.

