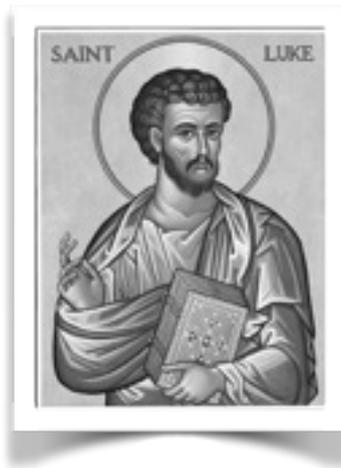


Home Group notes w/c 11th September 2016

Jesus' words in Luke

Things that are lost

This autumn I am staying with the Lectionary readings and spending some time looking at the teaching of Jesus as it is recorded in Luke's Gospel. The talks have been recorded and are available at ChadTalks.org so you can listen again or catch up if you need to.



This week we read Luke chapter 15, verses 1 to 10. Have a read together of these familiar stories. The context of the stories is clear - the religious authorities were grumbling at Jesus and how he mingled with outcasts and sinners even, shock horror, eating with them. We might read these parables and reflect on our own experiences of being found by Jesus, but if we forget the context we might not let Jesus challenge us about where we might draw the line with people.

Without getting into a discussion about specific people or actions in our Church family, where do we individually start to want to draw a line with other people? Do we draw a line because of what we were brought up to think as right behaviour, or do we feel threatened or uncomfortable because of how other people act (or do we feel jealous that they can do something we would love to be able to do), or is there something we find in the life of Jesus which helps us? (It is always good to bear in mind that each one of us is somebody else's "difficult person").

Does anyone have something to share about their experience of being lost and then being found? What did it feel like to be lost - and how does that compare with the feeling of being found? How did the shepherd come and find you?

Please be honest here. Who doesn't really have a strong recollection of a sense of being lost? That might be because it was so long ago, or perhaps because of being a Christian from childhood.

We also read Paul's words to Timothy in 1 Timothy chapter 1 verses 12 to 17. Read those verses together. This is something of a description by Paul of his moving from being lost to being found. What would you say are the key elements in Paul's story that brought him to being found?

I found it interesting to think about Paul whilst he was still Saul, and perhaps how he saw himself. Read also Philippians chapter 3 verses 4 to 7. Saul seems to have quite a clear sense of his status before God - he doesn't come across as somebody who was, in any sense, lost - until, that is, he was met on the Damascus Road by Jesus. Are there times when we rely on something to give us status or purpose, like Saul of Tarsus, instead of seeing the grace and mercy of God at work in us, like Paul?

Going back to Paul's story in 1 Timothy, are we able to describe how God's abundant grace has been at work in us recently? It can be easy as a Christian to have stories about God being at work which have hung on, possibly past their "use by date". What's fresh in your Christian life?

All this talk of lost becoming found gets me excited once again for the prospect of working in conjunction with the Holy Spirit to see people come to be found and join our Church family. This is always a much messier process than we like to think and difficult to plan - and so it often feels too difficult to begin. How can we work and pray to bring the lost into our Church family so that they get found by Jesus? How do we go out as a Church family to meet those we think of as lost?

I always find it really hard to get the right balance between Church as the place where people belong in order to be built up and encouraged and Church as the people who go out into the world to spread the Good News about what Jesus has done. Where does that balance lie in your life and ministry? Certainly, we all have different gifts and opportunities - but who are the lost around you?

Perhaps we could draw to a close by praying for people we know who are lost in some way (even if they don't think of themselves in that way). Pray too for opportunities to meet them in the days ahead.