

## Hide and Seek – Lost and Found

Luke 15:1-10 Psalm 51:1-10

One of the things that children love to do is play games...we have all been children and we no doubt recall some of the games, we enjoyed as we were growing up. Perhaps for many of us those games didn't involve, a TV screen, hand controls, a phone or a computer.

I am talking about those games that have been handed down through the generations... what were your favourite childhood games?

If I was to ask Peter (Church Warden) to go into the corner of the church and count to 100...with his back to us and asked you all to run away and hide from him...well you might think that I was just being a bit mean, or weird...Or panic that I was serious! ...Or you might realise that I am simply illustrating a game of 'hide and seek.' A game handed down through the generations: all the children would go hiding and then the seeker, after the countdown would go looking for them.

It is a fascinating game, in the sense that those children who are hiding, will always want to peak out of their hiding place to see where the seeker is.

Now there is always one who will hide so well until they 'win the game', or are forgotten! But for most there is a joy in being found and they will somehow giveaway their hiding place, so that the seeker can find them. As each one is found, they join back together – and encourage the seeker to find the rest, who are waiting to be found.

This is often the game we play with God...Hide and Seek – Lost and Found...

In chapter 15 of Luke's gospel, we have 3 parables that hold elements of the game of 'Hide and Seek', as well as being lost and found...The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin and The Lost Son. Just like the game of 'Hide and Seek', perhaps some of those who are lost in the maze of life, will be hiding... but are silently waiting to be found, looking out a little for the seeker; and God who seeks us all out to return to the fold, will be delighted to find us, wherever and however we are to be found.

Each one of us can be lost in the maze of life and not be sure if we will be welcomed into God's loving embrace... but the starting point for Jesus is grace... searching not blaming, finding not punishing, rejoicing not condemning.

The Pharisees and teachers of the law muttered, 'this man welcomes sinners and eats with them'... but the starting point for Jesus, is not one of sin...or who's in or whose out, or who gets a dinner invitation? For Jesus, everyone is invited. The first concern for Jesus is one of presence. Have we shown up, are we lost or are we still in hiding? What might it be like to be found in God and be lost in the wonder of his presence, his love for us, his will for our lives?

Throughout the gospel stories, Jesus chose to hang out with the 'wrong kind of people'. Much to the dismay of the religious elite, for them Jesus was breaking the law, crossing the lines, making God just a little too accessible...but the gospel tells us that the 'tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus.' He had words of transformation, for their lives. Living transformed lives in the fullness of God's will for us, is not easy and we will all be asked tough questions of our hearts and our lives – in each new day. Did we follow the teaching of Jesus? Did we repent and turn away from those things that separate us from God and one another? Or did we mark out the sin of another and

focus on them instead of us? Did we understand the sacrifice of love that was laid down for us all, on the cross?

The grace and character of God, as revealed in Jesus' - searching, finding and rejoicing, will depend upon the circumstances of our lives. We have and will experience that grace, in many different ways. We matter to God, those who are lost, those who are hiding and those who aren't sure if they even want to be found. There is a place set for each one of us. This fellow who 'welcomes, sinners and eats with them' is constantly searching for us and rejoicing, as we make our presence known and come out of our hiding places, in the maze of our lives.

Maybe you are lost, or hiding in the maze of your life, right now! You need to know that God is already looking for you, reaching out to you, with a love that knows no limits and no bounds.

Or maybe you are hearing this story of God's limitless love for you for the first time.

However, or wherever you find yourself today. I invite us all into a time of personal prayer, as we re-dedicate our lives to God, as David did in psalm 51. Remembering how God found us, when we were lost and how we long for others to know of his invitation to all.

So we pray...

Take me as I am Lord. Be the one true Lord of my life. Lead me into the paths of right living for your plan and purpose and not my own. Shape me into the person you would have me become. Thank you Jesus for finding me in the wilderness. Let me rejoice with all those in heaven and on earth, for every lost soul that you find. Into your loving hands I commit, my life, my soul and my entire being. Amen.

