

Lectionary readings: Jeremiah 4: 11-12, 22-28; Psalm 14; 1 Timothy 1: 12-17; Luke 15: 1-10

For reflection and prayer

- **Jeremiah 4:** We could be reading here a description of our own day - little knowledge of God, people going their own way living in selfishness, emptiness, a spiritual wilderness, chaos, emptiness. It's a picture of despair, and yet Jeremiah is not without hope. We might like to reflect on these questions this week - How can I get to know God better? How can I live less selfishly? How can I fill the spiritual emptiness in my life? How can I turn the spiritual wilderness that is my own heart into fruitfulness? We are all on a journey and we must never stop working at our faith and allowing God to be to us all that He wants to be.
- **Psalm 14:** There are many people around us who say, 'There is no God.' We say we believe in God, but do we live as if we do? God is looking for people who are seeking Him, who are open to Him. How much do we desire God? What part does God play in our life day by day? God is longing to make Himself known to us. He is longing to share His life with us every day of the week. He is inviting us to open our hearts to Him. Are we responding to His invitation?
- **1 Timothy 1:** Paul is speaking here of how God changed him from an arrogant, cruel persecutor of the church to a Christian missionary. The grace and love of God poured over him as he came face to face with the reality of what he was doing and who he was persecuting. God is rich in mercy and love. Are we

allowing God to set us free from the guilt and failures of our past by letting His love and mercy wash over us?

- **Luke 15:** There is a marked contrast between Jesus' attitude to people and the Pharisees'. Jesus' life is characterised by love and acceptance; He values every individual and sees each person as precious. The Pharisees, on the other hand, looked on certain people with contempt and adopted an air of superiority. Are we demonstrating to those around us the mind of Jesus - loving, accepting, showing mercy and kindness, understanding, welcoming? The two stories of the lost sheep and the lost coin emphasise how important each individual is to God. God is reaching out and searching for us in whatever state we find ourselves, for we too wander off, get ourselves into difficult situations, don't know where to turn at times. And there is Jesus, longing for us, searching for us, wanting to help us, to comfort us, to lead us back and help us to find healing and wholeness. But He will never force us to be found. The decision is ours.

A prayer

Lord, I wander off when I think I can live my life without giving any thought to You. I wander off when I refuse to believe that You love me and regard me as precious. I wander off when I hold on to my guilt, my fears and my shame and won't receive Your forgiveness and healing. I wander off when I think I can go it alone. Lord, forgive me. I realise that You are searching for me; You are longing for me to recognise You and come to You so that You can be to me all that You want to be to me. Lord, help me this week to face up to the fact that I, too, am a lost sheep and need to be found by You. Lord, let me make the decision to open my life to You in a new way so that I experience Your love. Amen.