

## 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday, September 14, 2025

### Introduction to the day

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

Let us pray.

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: Exodus 32:7-14

A reading from Exodus.

*While Moses is on Mount Sinai, the people grow restless and make a golden calf to worship. Today's reading shows Moses as the mediator between an angry God and a sinful people. Moses reminds God that the Israelites are God's own people, and boldly asks for mercy for them.*

### PSALM: Psalm 51:1-10

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. (Ps. 51:1)

### SECOND READING: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

A reading from 1 Timothy.

*The letters to Timothy and Titus are called the pastoral epistles because they contain advice especially intended for leaders in the church. Here the mercy shown to Paul, who once persecuted the church, is cited as evidence that even the most unworthy may become witnesses to the grace of God.*

### GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-10

*Jesus tells two stories that suggest a curious connection between the lost being found and sinners repenting. God takes the initiative to find sinners, each of whom is so precious to God that their recovery brings joy in heaven.*

### GOSPEL MESSAGE - God Gathers Us

The sense of heartache that sets in when a treasured keepsake goes missing can be profound. How many times have we panicked when searching for a special item that is not where we think we left it? We may spend hours, days, *months* searching for what was lost, even when the trail goes cold.

We ourselves tend to get lost from time to time. We forget where we belong. We lose track of our belovedness. We grumble and complain, and the joy that once sustained us slips away. This sort of separation is hard on our hearts. It is hard on our spirits. And it is hard on our relationships. But these are exactly the places where Jesus meets us and regathers us into God's love. No matter where we find ourselves wandering, Jesus is there already, turning over every last piece of furniture in the cosmic house to find us when we've gotten lost, to free us when we've gotten lodged in difficult places. And

when we are found, the heavens celebrate with us, breaking bread and pouring wine and giving thanks for the chance to be together again. What a remarkable thing!

Indeed, God has drawn near to us already. In bread and wine, in water and word, we know the faithfulness of a God who won't rest until we all are cared for and all of life's relationships are made right. We are, each and all, recipients of the generous love of the Christ who eats with us, who seeks us out when we are lost, and who gathers us back again and again to celebrate abundant life, togetherness, and the joy of restorative community.

Thanks be to God, who goes with us along the way and never ceases to gather us back into such divine folds of love.

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

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 especially Shirley Glickman, Donna L. Hoffman, Cassie Jessup, Wanda Neuman, Glenda Panke, Barry Rogers, Marilyn Schneider, Doug Sell, Debbie Thom, and those in long term care facilities and senior residences. Give us compassionate hearts to accompany those who are hurting and courage to work for justice and mercy. In this moment of silence, we name out loud or in the quiet of our hearts, those who need your healing touch. 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.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

## **BLESSING**

Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

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