

Readings: Jeremiah 4: 11-12 22-28 & Luke 15: 1-10

Sermon: The God who sees and seeks

The big picture

So this week, I've had the heating on. I've watched schoolchildren getting drenched on their way to and from school, and I've heard the familiar chorus of seasonal coughing—autumn has clearly arrived. These are the markers we come to recognise, aren't they? The turning of the seasons, the shift in the air.

And yet, the summer we've just left behind—the hottest the UK has ever recorded—already feels like a distant memory. Some will mourn its passing; others will breathe a sigh of relief. But it leaves behind questions, too. What's happening to our climate, our communities, our world?

In this church season of Creationtide, which runs from the 1st of September to the 4th of October, we're invited to reflect on the whole of God's creation—not just the environment, but the state of our societies, our relationships, our spiritual health. And if we're honest, it seems that every time we turn on the news, something already bad is getting worse. The big picture feels heavy.

That sense of unravelling resonates deeply with the words of the prophet Jeremiah. He spoke to a people on the brink of invasion and exile—one of the most defining moments in biblical history. And he used the image of a “hot wind” sweeping across the land—not to cleanse, but to devastate. His language in this passage echoes the creation story in Genesis, but in reverse: where God once brought order and light, Jeremiah sees chaos and darkness returning.

So what was happening around Jeremiah? And more importantly, what did God have to say about it?

God in the ruins

Jeremiah's words are not easy to hear. They speak of devastation: a hot wind sweeping through the land, not to refresh but to ruin. The people had turned away from God, and the consequences were unfolding around them. It's tempting to read this as divine fury, as if God were simply fed up and ready to wipe the slate clean.

But Jeremiah's tone is more complex than that. There's anger, yes - but also sorrow. God is not indifferent. God is heartbroken. "My people are foolish," God says, "they do not know me." It's the cry of a parent watching a child walk into danger, knowing the pain that awaits.

And yet God does not abandon them.

Even in the midst of judgment, there's a line that flickers with hope: "Yet I will not make a full end." God sees the ruin, but also sees what could be rebuilt. The way out isn't instant. It won't be easy. It will take time, and it will require something of the people - a turning, a repentance.

Repentance here isn't just saying sorry. It's about rediscovering who they are meant to be. It's about remembering the covenant, the calling, and the community to which they belong. It's about being found again.

Jeremiah shows us the cost of forgetting God. Luke shows us the joy of being remembered by God, and God coming to find them.

The God who knows what's lost

By the time Jesus tells these parables in Luke 15, he's already in trouble with the religious authorities. Their complaint? He parties too much—and with all the wrong people. Tax collectors, who were despised for collaborating with the Romans or Herod, and "sinners," a term that covered a wide range: those who flagrantly

broke social norms, and those who were simply too poor or marginalised to follow the temple laws properly.

And if we're honest, their reaction was understandable. These leaders had spent their lives trying to uphold the law, preserve tradition, and protect their community from corruption. They weren't cartoon villains—they were trying to do what they thought was right. So let's not be too quick to judge the Pharisees. Their discomfort with Jesus' table fellowship was rooted in fear, in a desire for holiness, in a longing for order.

But Jesus turns the tables—literally and figuratively.

He tells stories that reveal the heart of God. Not a God who waits for the perfect, but a God who searches for the lost. And not just the obviously lost—the ones who've wandered far and know it—but also the quietly lost. The ones who don't even realise they've slipped out of sight.

The parable of the lost coin is especially tender. A woman lights a lamp and sweeps the house, searching for one small coin. It's a picture of God's care for our hidden concerns—the dilemmas we carry deep inside, the struggles we've never voiced, the parts of ourselves we fear are too insignificant to matter. And yet God searches, God sees and God knows.

The lost sheep, on the other hand, reminds us that sometimes we drift without realising. We get caught up in habits, distractions and assumptions. We don't mean to wander -but we do. And still, God comes looking.

These parables aren't just about being found. They're about being known. Fully, tenderly and joyfully.

Not forgotten

It's easy, in times of change or uncertainty, to feel overlooked. Whether it's the shifting patterns of our world or the restructuring

of something as familiar as our Church life, we can begin to wonder: does anyone see? Does anyone care?

Jeremiah warned his people not to forget God - not to lose sight of the One who had formed them, called them, and walked with them. That warning still speaks today. In the midst of horrible headlines, the exhaustion of worry, and the concern of change, we are invited to remember and trust God.

But a deeper truth is that when we do forget God, God does not forget us.

The God who searches for the lost sheep and the hidden coin is the same God who sees us and our church - its history, its hopes and its hurts. No-one is missed in the bigger picture. No concerns are too small. No questions are ignored. God holds them, honours them, and accompanies you and me through them.

And while the way forward may not be instant or easy, it will be guided. God is not just watching from a distance—God is sweeping the floor, lighting the lamp, and calling us home. Not just to a place, but to a deeper trust, a renewed faith a new hope.

Heavenly parties

So yes, the heating's back on, the coughs are echoing, and the hot wind of summer has finally given way to the damp shuffle of autumn. But not all hot winds are seasonal—some blow through our lives with force, stirring up uncertainty, grief, or change. Jeremiah felt it. We feel it too.

Yet even in the chaos, God is not absent. God is searching, sweeping, calling. Whether we're the sheep who wandered off without realising, or the coin tucked away in a forgotten corner, we are seen, we are known and we are loved.

And here's the promise: however tough the world seems, and whatever we're facing—globally or personally—God has a way

through. Not always instant, not always easy, but always real. And when we're found, when we turn, when we trust—there's a party waiting and we have it from the best of authorities, that Heaven really does throw the very best ones. Amen

Rev'd Richard Haynes 13th Sunday after Trinity, 13 September 2025