

Prayer and Collect

Now spend some time in thanking God for all that you have shared together. Pray for one another, that God would continue to give you opportunities to speak about him, and courage to take them. Pray for your church to be a place where people come to faith in Christ.

*Lord Jesus,
you send us out into your world
to be your witnesses
in the things we say and do.
Grant us the help of the Holy Spirit
that we may point people to your love,
and so bring glory to you. Amen.*

Looking ahead

How are you planning to bear witness to Christ in the future? Share your hopes and commitments with one other person and give them permission to ask “How are out getting on?”

Reflections for individuals

Readings for this week

*Monday = Luke 15. 1-7
Tuesday = Luke 15.8-10
Wednesday = Isaiah 12.1-6
Thursday = Revelations 22.1-6
Friday = Hebrews 12.1-3*

EVERYDAY WITNESS

8

8: Sharing in the Joy of God

Icebreaker

Name something that brings you joy.

Collect

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Introducing the theme *(read aloud)*

Our mental image of God may not include the thought that God is joyous. When we think about Jesus, we often picture him as the man of sorrows, taking the suffering of the world into himself. But that's only part of the picture. God takes joy in his creation, particularly in the creation of humanity, declaring that this is very good. Jesus tells stories in which he likens the kingdom of God to a party – a wedding banquet – and is not averse to contributing to the joy of a literal wedding reception by turning water into wine. The picture of the coming kingdom in the book of Revelation is a place of joy, where sorrow and sickness are no more, but where healing and peace are our continual experience in the presence of God. The writer of the Hebrews says that Jesus set his face towards the cross because of the joy that was set before him – joy that he takes in having brought us into a new relationship with God. The parables about lost things in Luke 15 make the same point. When something is lost, be it a sheep, a coin or a son, there is grief. But when that thing is found again, there is great joy.

Reading

Luke 15.1-7, Luke 15.8-10 and Luke 15.11-31

Discussion

1 Can you think of a time that you lost something that meant a great deal to you which you later found again? How did you feel?

Now look at the reading from Luke 15:11-31. This is one of the best known of Jesus' parables, the story of the lost son. It builds on the two preceding parables: the stories of the lost sheep and the lost coin.

2 What do you notice about the attitude and actions of the shepherd, the woman and the father in these stories? What were they feeling when the sheep, the coin and the son were missing? What risks were they prepared to take to find what was lost?

3 How did they react when the lost sheep, coin and son were found again?

To read aloud

That joy is what God feels when one of his children returns to him. Of course, God's children are never completely 'lost' in the sense that God does not know where they are. But they may feel that God is lost to them. They may be unaware of God's love, grace or forgiveness, or the promise of new and eternal life through Jesus. As we have begun to speak about our faith, about church and about God to the people around us, so God is reaching out in great love to them. And when they allow themselves to be found by God, there is great rejoicing in heaven.

Activity

This is the last home group meeting of the **Everyday Witness** journey. So use this time to tell stories and to share how this journey has been for you. What do you have to be joyful about from the past few weeks? And then talk about how you are going to take this forward. What is going to be different in your own life, and perhaps in your church, as a result of this course? How will you continue to share your faith, to pray for five and to encourage one another? How will you continue to support one another?