

Sermon on Sunday 6 July 2025: 8.00am BCP Third Sunday after Trinity by Rev. Bill Church

Readings: 1 Peter 5. 5 & Luke 15. 1

"... the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour."

These words are incorporated into the traditional Compline service, praying for God's protection during the dark hours.

We more often think of evil as something we are tempted to follow so it is scary to think that the power of evil is actively stalking us.

By contrast, the Gospel must be one of the most reassuring and comforting passages of scripture.

God will not rest until all 100 sheep are safe; until the full set of coins is assured.

Coins have no agency – the coin had just got lost somehow.

Sheep (and by implication, humankind) do have agency.

The parable of the Good Shepherd/Lost Sheep says nothing about how or why the missing sheep got lost.

Maybe it went too far looking for tasty pasture; or took risks climbing a difficult scree; or had been chased out by the other sheep; or had stumbled and damaged a leg; or had been frightened by the thought of a roaring lion and panicked; or was just a contrary sort of sheep.

The shepherd in the parable makes no distinction whether the sheep had a respectable excuse or not.

He just wants to collect together all the creatures entrusted to him.

And that is reassuring. Any of us may have overreached ourselves; or been frightened into foolish acts; or reacted badly to exclusion; or been tempted by some apparently desirable project; or been plain contrary.

The parable reassures us that God wants to gather all his people into his bosom, deserving or undeserving, prudent or foolish, wayward or conformist, all together into a safe sheepfold.