

5 October, 2025

17th Sunday after Pentecost

God does not abandon His people when they go Astray

Hosea 11:1-11, Psalm 90:1-17, Philemon 7-20, Luke 15:1-10

Key Verse: *“Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.”* Luke 15:6

In our spiritual journey, we often find ourselves drifting from the path God has set before us. In moments of failure or rebellion, we may wonder if God has abandoned us. But today, the Scripture reminds us that God, in His infinite love and mercy, never abandons His people. He continually calls them back, even when they stray far from Him. In our sermon today, based on Hosea 11:1-11, Psalm 90:1-17, Philemon 7-20, and Luke 15:1-10, we will reflect on how God persistently seeks us and welcomes us back when we return.

1. God’s Faithful Love for His People (Hosea 11:1-11)

The book of Hosea offers a powerful image of God’s unfailing love for Israel, despite their disobedience and unfaithfulness. In Hosea 11:1-11, God speaks as a loving parent, describing His relationship with Israel from their early days. He says, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt, I called my son.” This reveals the tender care of God, who rescued His people from slavery and nurtured them with love. Even as Israel turns to idolatry and sin, God’s heart aches for His people. He says, “My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused” (Hosea 11:8). Despite their rebellion, God promises not to abandon them. Instead, He vows to show mercy, saying, “I will not carry out my fierce anger... For I am God, and not a man.” This passage reminds us that even when we stray, God’s love for us remains steadfast. Like a parent who longs for a wayward child to return home, God continuously calls us back to Himself, ready to forgive and restore us.

2. God's Eternity and Our Frailty (Psalm 90:1-17)

Psalm 90 offers a prayer of Moses that contrasts God's eternal nature with human frailty. In verses 1 and 2, the psalmist acknowledges that God has been the refuge of His people "from everlasting to everlasting." God's presence is constant, and He is the same throughout all generations. However, the psalmist also recognizes humanity's limitations. "You turn people back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, you mortals'" (v.3). Life is short, but God's mercy is enduring. In this context, the psalm emphasizes the importance of returning to God and seeking His favour while we have the time. In moments when we feel distant from God due to our failures, Psalm 90 offers a reminder that God is our eternal dwelling place. He is not limited by time or circumstance. If we return to Him, He renews us with His compassion and grace, transforming our fleeting days into ones filled with purpose and joy.

3. Restoring Broken Relationships (Philemon 7-20)

In the letter to Philemon, Paul addresses the importance of reconciliation and restoration within the body of Christ. Paul appeals to Philemon to welcome back his runaway slave, Onesimus, not as a slave but as a "dear brother" (v.16). Onesimus, whose name means "useful," had once been "useless" due to his actions, but Paul assures Philemon that he is now useful again, having been transformed by the Gospel. This passage demonstrates how God's love can transform broken relationships. Even when we have been "useless" or have gone astray, God is ready to restore us to a position of honour and usefulness within His kingdom. The reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus reflects how God seeks to reconcile us to Himself, restoring our brokenness and giving us a new identity in Christ. Like Onesimus, we may have strayed from our calling, but God is always ready to forgive and restore us. He invites us to return to Him and to find our place once more in His family.

4. God Rejoices Over the Lost Who Return (Luke 15:1-10)

In the Gospel reading from Luke 15, Jesus tells two parables: the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin. Both parables illustrate God's deep concern for those who are lost and His joy when they are found. Jesus describes the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep to search for the one that is lost, and the woman who turns her house upside down to find her lost coin. In both stories, when what was lost is found, there is great rejoicing. "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep" (Luke 15:6). This image of God as the one who actively seeks the lost should bring us great comfort. No matter how far we have strayed, God searches for us, and when we return, He celebrates.

These parables remind us that God's desire is not to punish but to restore. His heart is filled with joy when one of His children comes back to Him. This is the heart of the Gospel message: God's relentless love for sinners and His eagerness to welcome them home.

Conclusion

In our journey of faith, we may stumble and stray, but God never abandons us. Through the words of Hosea, the psalmist, Paul, and Jesus, we see the persistent love of God, who seeks the lost and brings them back into His fold. No matter how far we have wandered, God is always ready to forgive, restore, and rejoice over us when we return. Let us take comfort in the fact that God's love never fails, and He will never abandon His people.

Prayer

Loving and gracious God, we thank You for Your unfailing love and mercy. Even when we go astray, You seek us and call us back to You. Help us to always remember that You are our refuge and strength, and that no matter how far we may wander, You are always ready to forgive and restore us. We pray for all those who feel distant from You today may they hear Your call and find their way back to Your loving arms. Fill our hearts with joy as we remember that You rejoice over every lost soul that returns. In Jesus' name, Amen.