

Natalie Bell
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Lost and Found
Luke 15:1-10

Phil 4:4-8

Rejoice^[a] in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.^[b] ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, beloved,^[c] whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about^[d] these things.

Luke 15:1-10

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ So he told them this parable: ⁴ "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸ "Or what woman having ten silver coins,^[a] if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Well, I've heard that there's a **fine line** between a long, drawn out sermon, and a hostage situation, so this one will be brief, in honor of holy humor!

I did read about a wife who **'lost something'** of her husband's at church one Sunday. She dropped her purse in the aisle, and a large TV remote came rolling out....

the usher asked her,
do you always bring your remote to church with you?
Oh, she said, this is my husband's.
He refused to come to church today,
so this is probably the worst thing I could do to him.
Poor guy!

You know what it's like to **lose** something, or someone,
and to **rejoice** when you finally find it?

Ever lost something precious, like a **wedding ring**?
It's been awhile, but I remember my heart stopping when I realized that my
wedding rings were missing.
I laid them down on a comforter to put lotion on my hands, and then I just
forgot and went on to something else, and when I realized what had
happened, well, they were gone.
I got the flashlight, and looked in a panic everywhere!
But no luck.

Somehow, a few days later, I was looking into a bag hanging up a few feet
away, and there, as some light was coming in through the window,
I could see something shiny.
And it was the rings.

Apparently when we'd changed the comforter on the bed,
They had flown through the air, into this purse a few feet away.
Hours of heartache, but I just had to laugh when I saw them.
Lost and found.

It's horrible to lose something **sentimental**....
or something you **need right away**....
like your car keys, or your contact lens...
Isn't that **frustrating**?

But nothing compares to **losing a child**, right?
I remember losing Jacob as a 18 month old toddler in New Jersey,
Now let me say there's a difference between shopping in Oklahoma and New
Jersey. There's a few more people out there!

I remember him letting go of my hand in a crowded store at Christmas time, with tons of people...and so many sights and sounds.... he wandered off, not even aware that he was lost. Meanwhile my heart had stopped, and I couldn't breathe. I was yelling for him, and frantically searching. And those 5 minutes seemed like an eternity until I spotted his little body wandering through the store without me..... and then my relief and joy when I could finally breathe again as I scooped him up in my arms and hugged him so tight while telling him not to ever run away again.

We **know** what it's like to lose something or someone valuable to us, don't we? and to rejoice when we find it?

But let's face it---these stories of a lost sheep and a lost coin--- they are **different**, right?

I mean sure, a sheep and a coin are important, but not SO important that you would stop your life to find them.... or throw a party when you did find them, right?

These are **strange** stories that don't fit with typical life experiences today, or back then.

They are **parables**.

Which means we're in for a ride with Jesus, because the layers of meaning are many and deep. And we have to realize these stories are told as a response to the criticism of the goody-too-shoes Scribes and Pharisees, who cannot believe that Jesus loves sinners. From his earliest days, Jesus hangs out with the sinners! So Jesus tells these stories, to say '*you wanna know how much I love sinners? Listen to this!*'

So often we read the Bible as a 'how to' manual. Or a 'don't do this' list of rules and regulations. But the Bible, and especially Jesus parables, are story—and not just story of 'how to do it' but stories of '**how God does' it.**

These stories are primarily about **God's character**—not ours.

Jesus makes that pretty clear in his ‘tongue in cheek’ introduction:
*‘which of you if having a hundred **sheep** does not leave the ninety-nine to go after the one until he finds it?’ And when he finds it, carries it on his shoulders home, to rejoice with friends?*

What???

No one does this.

This is **not** the way a shepherd works.

You don’t go all out for 1 lost sheep.

You count your blessings for the remaining 99!

And again Jesus tries this logic, with a second story.

*‘Or what woman having ten silver **coins**, and loses one, does not light a lamp, and sweep the entire house until she finds it, and then throws a party?’*

What??

No woman does this.

Not any of us.

You don’t throw a party over one found coin.

A party could cost far more than all ten coins!

These are stories about the **character of God**—not us.

These are the lengths God goes to seek and save the lost.

This is the **joy** God has when one lost person is found.

The numbers are important---100 and 10 were considered **complete**, whole numbers, to have one missing was to be **incomplete**.

The sheepfold and coin collection were incomplete,

and Jesus was trying to make them **whole again**.

This is how far God goes to make our community complete.

To make us whole again!

So what do you think?

Aren’t **we**, at different times in our lives, the lost sheep and lost coin?

Aren’t there times when we fall away from our faith,

Or away from our community?

Aren’t there times when parts of ourselves are lost and incomplete?

I think so!

And God is the kind of God **who will go all out** searching for us!

We talk a lot about looking for God, trying to find God,
When the truth is that often God is the one ***looking for us!***

Now, think about that for a minute!
We believe in a God who ***goes out looking for us!!!***
That's amazing, right?

Which is great, because sometimes we are just like the kid at Christmas,
We've let go of God's hand, and we ***don't even know we're lost,***
We're so busy looking around at all the world has to offer,
And all the time God is frantically calling our name,
Wanting to bring us home.
Ever been in that place—*lost and you didn't even know it?*

Sometimes we're like that ***lost coin,***
fallen down in between the sofa cushions,
but we can't do anything to get ourselves out,
We just wait for this loving God to find us, pick us up,
and then—shockingly, throw a party!

Ever felt like you can't do anything about your situation—
that you can't get back out, and you're ***just waiting on God to show up?***
We've all been in that place, right?

And sometimes, we are like the ***lost sheep,***
and we wander away, but God still leaves the rest of the fold,
to come after us...
and, there's a party in our honor in heaven and on earth
when we are finally carried home on the shoulders of Jesus!
Talk about amazing grace!

It's just like the hymn,
Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me....
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see!

Do you remember ever being lost....and found by God?
What about right now?
Are you lost right now?
Have you wandered away?

Have you fallen into the sofa cushions, and you can't get out?

If so, do you realize that **God wants to find you?**

And carry you home?

Home to a community of faith, a family of believers,
a place where you belong?

Because this is the kind of God we have...**a God of amazing GRACE.**

A God who looks for every one of us when we are lost...

And then rejoices when we are found!

A God who says **there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.**

(and think about this—that's real irony, because those 99 don't really exist!

We ALL need repentance!)

This is the kind of God we have...a God who wants to **bring people in,**

To make the community whole, and complete,

Knowing that without the lost ones—we are not whole.

And truth be told, we are ALL really the lost ones,

who need to be brought in, to be a whole people of God.

Jesus came for the lost, for the **broken people**, like you and I.

In Luke 5, when asked **why** he eats and drinks with sinners,

Jesus says, those who are well have no need of a physician,

but those who are sick I have come to call to repentance.

He's come for the broken....

now that's **Good News** if you ask me.

Just before our story of the lost objects in Luke 15,

Jesus talks about inviting all the lost and broken people to a **great banquet,**

Instead of just the friends and family!

Jesus comes for those who are broken.

Good News indeed!

Over this past week I've started attending some **prayer meetings**
for Owasso pastors.

In the past, it's been challenging for me to always get to these meetings,

or even attend at times because to be honest,

it's hard to be the only woman pastor in town.

And we pastors have many different opinions on theology and whether women, or other broken persons can serve the church. I would not always be accepted in some churches.

But you know what's so great?
We can **pray together**—to the same God,
And we can **work together**, for the same Savior Jesus,
to serve those in need, those who are hurting in our community.
That's God's grace in action.
We may not all agree, but we
We can seek out the lost, together, just as God seeks all of us.

You know, Presbyterians are big on God's **grace**.
My prayer is that we will **live out** this grace in our church.
That we could always be welcoming to everyone,
and continue to reach out to the people of Owasso.
These free lunches during the school shutdown,
they are an opportunity for us, to show God's grace!

Jesus' own life and teachings were certainly about God's grace.
Jesus brought the sinners, the women, the broken and marginalized people into the center of his ministry, and he allowed them to do ministry with him.
And when he told stories like the lost sheep and coin,
he clearly was talking about **including** people, not excluding them.

You know, don't you think it causes God great **sorrow**,
to see all these denominations and divisions and schisms
of the church of Jesus Christ, based on who is 'out'?
Maybe we should spend much more time bringing all people 'in'!

If we were a church that excluded broken people I could not be **your pastor**.
You have extended to me God's grace in my brokenness,
you have shown it in word and deed.
I pray that we would do this for all people,
that all would feel welcome,
especially the broken, the lost.

If we believe in a ***God who goes all out*** for the 1 lost sheep or 1 missing coin,
Should we not also be ***instruments of this kind of grace***,
In our own lives, and in the life of our church?

And shouldn't we be a place of ***celebrating and joy***—
when even one person finds a relationship with Jesus?
I sure think so!

Friends, hear the ***Good News of the Gospel***:
It's a gift to be able to share God's grace in this world.
And it's a special gift to celebrate when people come to know Jesus!
There's more joy in heaven for one person, who decides to go in the right
direction,
And more joy in church when anyone decides to follow Jesus!

May we open our hearts and lives to all who need the grace of Christ!
May we welcome others, just as Jesus has welcomed us,
And rejoice as He rejoices, when any of the lost are found.
Amen.