

# The Parables of Jesus: The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, welcome here for this Sunday, June 13th. So I want to begin this morning, I sometimes begin with a confession. I'm going to confess to you this morning, I am a loser.

The statement may surprise you. Perhaps your initial reaction, I'm just, I'm way shorter than Connor, I'm going to move that so Len and Sue can see. It may not surprise you, and maybe, of course, we knew that, hopefully that's not your reaction.

But as I look out on the congregation this morning, I see those of you that are here this morning in person, and I recognize that you are also losers. And now, before you get offended, please, before you get offended, let me clarify the statement, alright?

What do I mean when I say we're all losers? Well, what I mean is that we've all lost something, right? We've experienced loss in our lives.

I'd venture to say that we've all lost things, right? We've lost our keys or our phones, our wallets, our purses. I don't personally carry a purse, but that could be a thing.

[ 1 : 15 ] Or at times during the pandemic, I think we've all begun to start to lose our marbles, right? Do you have a hole in your marble bag? Sometimes I do. And maybe you've been in an unfamiliar neighborhood trying to find an address, and you've gotten lost.

Or maybe you've been in a new city or a new town, and you found yourself geographically challenged. I married someone who's geographically challenged. And maybe you've been hiking and missed the sign for a trail.

That's happened to me. Have you missed your turnoff on the hand day and had to completely reorganize your plans? Are you expecting an exit and it's not there?

I'm sure that sense of worry, that sense of anxiety or possibly even panic is familiar to us. When we've lost something or lost ourselves.

I have this ring that I wear, and I have this really weird attachment to it. It's not like it was a special gift, but it's meaningful to me. And so if I put it somewhere and forget where I put it, I start to panic.

[ 2 : 23 ] And I don't know why. It's replaceable. It's not. But it's... Do you see that human nature thing coming? It's familiar to us, that sense of losing something.

Even the figures of speech that we use have this concept ingrained in them, many of them. We say things like, in a conversation, maybe you've said this yourself, you've totally lost me, right?

We say that we've lost track of time. Oh, I lost track of time. I've got to go. We have trouble getting an idea across clearly to someone in some way. And we say that the meaning, what we were trying to get across, was somehow lost in translation, right?

Maybe you can think of others. There are probably other lost expressions you can think of. But more seriously, we've all likely, in fact, I can guarantee it, experienced the loss of a relationship. Whether due to a death, or a breakdown in communication somehow, or a change of direction in our lives, we've had a relationship loss of some kind.

[ 3 : 35 ] And in many ways, the death of a loved one, that kind of loss, is the most personal. It's the most lingering. The most painful, and somehow, sometimes, the most permanent seeming to us.

And although, let's take a moment to recognize, for Christians, as the Apostle Paul says, for anyone who believes in Jesus, and has put their trust in Him, we do not grieve, as Paul says, like the rest of men.

The rest of mankind, who do not have what? Hope. The sense of being lost, that sense of losing something, that's what we're going to consider this morning, as we continue this series in the parables of Jesus.

And as I mentioned last week, when we explored the parable of the lost son, it may seem like we're going backwards this morning, because these two shorter parables of Jesus, the lost sheep, and the lost coin, which we're looking at this morning, why is it backwards?

Well, the parable of the lost son that we looked at last week, actually comes after the two from this morning. So these two parables we're looking at today, are found in Luke 15, verses 1 to 10.

[ 5 : 05 ] So you can turn to it in your Bibles, open your app on your phone, or listen as I read. Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathered around to hear Him, Jesus.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the laws muttered, this man welcomes sinners and eats with them. Then Jesus told them this parable.

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, rejoice with me, I have found my lost sheep.

I tell you that in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

[ 6 : 12 ] Jesus continues, In the same way, Jesus says, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

I had one of my young adult friends ask me about the formal response that you can sometimes encounter when someone reads scripture. She was seeking to understand it.

What is this interaction that happens? And it turns out that other people in our young adults group were wondering as well. So if you come from a more liturgical church kind of format, Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, so on, after reading scripture, you may have heard someone read and close the reading with the words, the word of the Lord.

So not if that's familiar. This acknowledges that we've just read scripture, God's word to us, right?

And the congregational, and I heard somebody say it, the congregational response to that statement is, Thanks be to God.

So with those words, we acknowledge that God's amazing truth is conveyed throughout scripture. We're grateful for it. And the fact that it remains true and alive to us even today.

[ 7 : 55 ] So as non-traditional as I may seem sometimes, I'd like to adopt that practice here at Braemar. Because I really felt this strongly this week.

I believe it sets apart the reading of scripture. And it gives us the opportunity as we read it together in community to acknowledge its significance to us.

So while we may not always have guest speakers or preachers remember to do this, and I may forget at times, but hopefully you'll give me grace as always, let's seek to adopt this practice together.

So let's give it a try. I've just read scripture, and I say the word of the Lord, and you respond with, Amen.

So let's try, let's give that a try. Let's begin unpacking these two parables together this morning. It's interesting because before Jesus even gets into the parable, Luke sets a bit of the stage for us.

[ 8 : 56 ] That opening section, that opening sentence, points out to us that the tax collector, that tax collectors and sinners, sinners. And your translation, your Bible may actually have, mine does, a couple of my translations do, have quotation marks around that word sinners.

So it says that tax collectors and sinners were sitting down to listen to Jesus tell these stories. So our initial reaction may be to think that Luke, the author of the passage, right, is making a judgment here about this audience.

That Luke himself is classifying these people as sinners. But the next sentence clarifies that for us. We learn that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were muttering.

Are you a mutterer? Sometimes I'm a mutterer. We're muttering about Jesus' choice of students. They were prejudging, and we've talked about this before.

Looking at someone based on their class, or their attitude, or their profession, or their occupation, or God forbid, the color of their skin, that people were, that Jesus was teaching here.

[ 10 : 11 ] And do you remember that judgmental perspective? We saw it from the Pharisee, and the tax collector, and the temple. The Pharisees, these teachers of the law, these religious leaders, were very concerned about maintaining their personal holiness, their personal righteousness before God.

But Jesus, we recognize in Scripture, always focused on the very people that, I'm going to use quotes now, polite society, rejected.

They discarded. He came, Jesus' sole purpose was to come and share God's love, and offer God's salvation to sinners.

The least of these, right? Not the people who thought they had figured it out. And that's an important example to keep in mind, because how often might we allow what people think of our personal reputation, or how we think people view us, how often might we allow that to get in the way of doing the right thing for someone else?

I have a neighbor two doors down, and he and I were chatting the other day, and as males typically do, we eventually got around to the conversation of, so what do you do?

[ 11 : 37 ] And I said, I'm a pastor. And I could see him immediately process, how much did I swear before this point? And I said, Dylan, relax, relax.

But he said, really? You're a pastor? So we talked about that a bit, but I don't, to me, I'm trying to be more and more aware of the times when I think, don't step in, or this is none of my business.

Well, how often is that out of a sense of, wow, I can't, you know, I feel, I will feel embarrassed. I will feel uncomfortable. Sometimes being uncomfortable is okay.

But that was something that he and I reflected on during our conversation, is that people don't tend to step in, don't tend to see someone else and what they might need and try to help fill it.

And I thought that was very interesting coming from a guy who has really no time for church. He's wired in a very Christ-like sort of way, in my opinion. So as Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep, whether it's familiar to you or not, do you wrestle with the logic a little bit?

[ 12 : 51 ] So a shepherd starts with a herd of 100 sheep. And I don't know about you. Yes, that is a sheep pun. But I think our tendency may be to say, consider yourself lucky, shepherd.

shepherd. You've got 99. So what exactly are you doing? You can get a single replacement sheep much better than putting 99 at risk. Is that where your mind goes?

Like, I believe that's where my mind has gone in the past. But have you ever had a pet run away on you? Perhaps a child?

I've told a story of Emily disappearing when she was about this big in a department store and then into a mall. If that has happened to you, if you've missed, you know, if you've lost someone or something in that way, can you remember the reaction that you felt?

The emotion that you felt in that moment? The panic? That would be a crazy reaction, wouldn't it? To say, I can have another child.

[ 14 : 00 ] I'll just get another dog. No. That seems insane, doesn't it? We have an emotional connection. But do we see that as being somewhat an inappropriate or odd reaction?

I hope so. not the reaction to be connected to the loved one or the pet or whatever, but the thought of, you know, our immediate logic of, well, you have 99, count yourself lucky.

It doesn't make sense when you think about a connection to someone or something. But the reaction of the shepherd is familiar here too as well, isn't it?

It's almost exactly the same as the reaction of the father when the prodigal son returns home. There's a restoration here.

There's a reconnection, a celebration over a relationship. But again, Jesus always helpfully grounds this story for us in the truth of salvation.

[ 15 : 10 ] He says in verse 7, I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Have you felt like a lost sheep in your life sometimes? Have you wandered away from the flock? perhaps you followed another voice instead of your shepherd?

The message here is not that God cares more about people who haven't come to faith than the rest of us. It's not trying to convey the message of you're already taken care of, he's not going to worry about you.

That's not it at all. This message is about deep love and it's about patience and it's about value.

That one sheep, that poor little sheep probably didn't even perceive itself to be lost, to be in need of being found, but that sheep has a home and it belongs in, it was made for community.

[ 16 : 32 ] Does that sound familiar at all? I believe it's most often just when we think we've figured things out for ourselves, when we've become comfortable in wandering away, that we usually find ourselves to be the most lost.

lost. And it's our good shepherd who looks for us, who calls to us, who wants to lead us back home. In these days of debit cards and tapping to pay, of e-transfers and bitcoin virtual currency, it may be challenging for us to relate to Jesus' parable of the woman and her lost coin.

But the message here we recognize is very similar. Jesus is actually reinforcing here. Again, it would be, I think, so easy for us to say, you've still got nine coins.

That's not a small thing. Don't worry about it that much. Or for her to say, well, at least I've got what I've got. But that is not the point.

[ 17 : 58 ] Jesus is driving home the passion of God's heart here. His eternal patience, his eternal perseverance, his eternal love and grace for his children, for each of us.

love the contrast between these two parables that we've looked at because with them and the parable of the lost son, which we looked at last week, there's such a neat contrast.

And that's why I split them up. Lots of pastors will preach all three of those lost things in a bundle. I think it's too much, and I think there's two different perspectives there.

We recognize that the son returned home himself, right? He sought to be reconciled to the father, whether he had a devious plan, we talked about that last week, or not.

And the father celebrated his return. But in our stories this morning, in these two parables this morning, we've recognized that even when someone doesn't perceive a need to be found, doesn't perceive that they are lost at all, may not perceive a need for God's presence in their life, God still searches them out.

[ 19 : 30 ] God will still use each of us to help them find their way. God's love is constant. I keep saying this this morning, but it's just such a powerful thing that I need to remind myself of.

God is patient. The covenants of the Old Testament, if that's not a patient God, here's what I'm going to do, my people, come back to me.

Connection made, restoration made, wander away. My people, here's what I'm going to do for you, here's my covenant to you, come home, wander away.

It is human nature. We are wanderers. But God is patient.

God is ready to welcome us and receive us at any time. He will always search for us. He will always give us opportunities to respond.

[ 20 : 54 ] Always, He will do that. But, He will not force us to come. Can you recognize that?

God is always there. God will always wait for you, but He will not make you come. My friends, that's our God.

God. That's His nature. That's His amazing grace. And as we reflect back on the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, do you recognize a bit of a progression there in those stories?

The shepherd looks for one sheep out of one hundred and celebrates its rescue. The woman looks for one coin out of ten and celebrates when she finds it.

And the father welcomes home one son out of two and celebrates that restored relationship. And we may even assign increasing value to that as we look at those stories.

[ 22 : 15 ] we may assign increasing value as we see those things pass. A lost sheep, maybe not that valuable.

A silver coin, when as we've talked about in the past, a denarius, one Roman coin was considered to be a significant amount of pay, a significant wage.

Silver coin must have been more valuable. But, oh boy, when a man only has two sons, a missing child, that must be the most valuable thing, right?

Well, we recognize, we need to recognize that though Jesus doesn't tell these stories to suggest that the circumstances are different, he tells them to suggest that they are the same.

regardless of who someone is or their perceived value in the eyes of the world, they are no less significant to God.

[ 23 : 24 ] And we see a sense of God's seemingly upside down kingdom here again. What we see as valuable, what the world sees as valuable, may not in fact be the way God sees it at all.

And I believe for most of us, that's probably a very good thing. My friends, are you feeling lost in your situation, in your circumstances?

are you feeling as though you're unimportant? That you've been forgotten or somehow cast aside? God sought you.

God sought me. And he still seeks all those, all of his children, who have not found him yet.

he's relentless in his love and care for every individual. Each of us has a special and unique value, unique significance, and unique importance to God.

[ 24 : 52 ] As the powerful words of that ancient song, Jesus Loves Me, reminds us, we are all precious in his sight.

Friends, trust that you are valuable to God and that he loves you deeply, more than you can ever know.

Hopefully, he can tell you one day, and he will, and that he will always look for you, and he will always welcome you back.

Amen.