

Living Hope: Lost and Found

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[0 : 0 0] I asked earlier for as people arriving a question. What is the most inconvenient thing you have ever lost?! In one go.

Fair enough. Still hassle, you've got to cancel them all, so. And we'll take one more. Anyone else? Yes. Oh no, lost the freedom pass to be able to travel on the bus.

So, I'm going to need a little bit of help this morning because I've lost a few things. So I'm going to need help finding them. But first off, this weekend I've been looking after some sheep for a friend, trying my hand at being a shepherd.

And I didn't want to leave them all at home when I'm here, so I thought I'd bring them to church with me. So they can have a bit more space. This space is probably bigger than my whole house put together.

So I've let them roam around, but I need help bringing them back in. There should be ten in total. So if you can help me to find ten sheep for me. I need one more sheep.

[1 : 2 7] I know I do have one sheep who has a tendency to wander off a little bit. They might, it's possible we tried to keep the doors closed so they couldn't leave, but it's possible they might have gone downstairs.

I don't know if anyone can go and look for me. Thank you. Oh, thank you very much. Alistair is back. Well, I am relieved.

I don't think my friend would be happy if I had lost any of his sheep. So I can fortunately tell him that they are safe and sound, and I'll try and keep an eye on them later on.

But this does remind me about another story of somebody who lost some sheep. So Jesus was talking about himself in that story, that actually just because everyone else is safe, he's going to go looking for that one person who is lost to save them as well, which is amazing.

I need a bit more help. You see, I brought something with me that I wanted to show off today. I've got, you might not be able to see it, if you want to come a bit closer to get a closer look. I have a set of Mickey, Disney 100th anniversary golden coins.

[2 : 3 9] This set is worth quite a lot of money, as long as the set is complete. The problem is I put them down earlier, and I don't remember where I put them, and I've lost one of these coins, and I really, really need to find it.

So I don't know if anyone can have a look around for me. I think the last place I had them might have been near the back. But while people are looking for that, there's another story as well.

This is verses 8 to 10. Or suppose a woman has 10 silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

Just when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, rejoice with me. I have found my lost coin. In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of angels of God over one sinner who repents.

So that Jesus told a story of a woman who had lost just one coin. And when she found it, she celebrated. How are we doing? Have we found my missing coin?

[3 : 52] Thank you for finding that. And thank you for the celebration that we found it as well. So there's two stories that Jesus told of people who have lost things.

One, because the sheep went wandering off on its own. The other, I'm fairly sure the coin probably didn't grow legs and wander off on their own. But the woman had lost her coin, and she was sad that she had lost it.

Both stories, they did everything they could to find it. And both stories, they rejoiced, they celebrated when they found what they had lost.

We're talking about living hope as we're coming up to Easter. So why these stories? It's because these stories are about us.

Jesus is talking about us. We are the ones who have decided to wander off on our own, to go and explore, to do things our way. We are the ones who have found ourselves misplaced.

[4 : 57] And Jesus comes after us. Jesus tells the story of the lost sheep because he makes the point that it doesn't matter how far we can go, he will still come after us.

And he tells the story of the lost coin because he makes the point of how valuable that coin is to the woman. And that's what we get.

That is our living hope in these stories. There is nowhere you can go where Jesus will not follow. And you are so, so valuable that Jesus will give up everything else until he finds you again.

I'm going to tell a version of the next story. As you can tell, I've called this a familiar story because even if you're not sure what it is at the moment, I'm sure for all of us, this story will become familiar because I think everyone has heard it in some way.

Charles Dickens said this is the greatest short story ever told. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who's an American lecturer and philosopher from the late 19th century, said it is the greatest story in the Bible and out of it.

[6 : 11] And there are scholars and theologians, both Christian and non-Christian, who give so much weight and credit to this story. Our story begins with a father.

A father who had two sons. An older son who's busy out in the fields. And a younger son. The father and his two sons live in a nice house with a nice garden, a very nice kitchen.

But they were a happy family in a happy home. But one day, the younger son had an idea. He thought, why do I need to work so hard for something that my father's going to give me anyway?

So he went to his father and said, hey dad, you know how I'm your favourite son, right? Well, you promised me quite a lot of money when you die.

Can I have that money now instead? The father was hurt. I don't have a picture of a hurt father.

[7 : 24] And a conversation began between the father and his youngest son. And the conversation went on and on and on. And, well, you get the picture.

And then the father reluctantly agreed to hand over his share of the inheritance, which was a third. And the older son got two thirds. Then the younger son got together all of his possessions.

He said bye to his dad. He said bye to his brother. He said bye to his house. And off he went on a very long journey.

Eventually, he arrived in a distant land. He's a very long way from home. And he's thinking, freedom.

Finally, I can do my own thing. He has friends. He has money. He has drinks. He has parties. And the parties go on.

- [8 : 30] And on and on. And this young man, he is loving life. Until one day, he decides, once all of these friends have gathered around him, he makes a decision.
- He says, drinks are on me. And everyone cheers. Cheers. But when he goes into his pocket to pay for the drinks, there's nothing left.
- He's wasted everything on that reckless living. So these friends who would come along, they don't want anything to do with him anymore. So they start to boo.
- They shout hiss. And they all walk away. Please don't walk away. So he's all on his own.
- He's a long way from home with no friends, no food, no family. He's miserable and depressed. And he's scared too.
- [9 : 36] And there's no one around who will help him. And, well, food costs money. So he needs to get a job. Eventually, he finds a farmer who needs some help.
- But it's not a nice job at all. The farmer says, you can feed my pigs. So he started working for the farmer.
- And the work was filthy. And it was smelly. And it's not very hygienic at all. But still, the young son didn't have enough money to pay for any food.
- But there was something available. See, the father had a couple dogs. And the farmer fed them. So he shared the food with the dogs. But the young son was glad to eat the dog food.
- Because he still didn't have any money. And no one else would give him anything. Eventually, the young son scratches his head. And he thinks to himself.
- [10 : 47] And he has an idea. If I was at home, I'd have friends and family and food. Even the pigs here eat better than I do.
- And yet, here I am, a long way from home. Hungry. Lonely. Upset. Scared. Angry. Frustrated. So he thinks, I know what I'll do.
- I'll go home. And I'll say sorry to my dad for being such a horrible son. And maybe, just maybe, I'll be forgiven. And maybe accepted as some sort of house servant.
- So the son gets together his possessions. And he begins his long journey home. And he's lonely.
- And sad. And miserable. And hungry. And he's thinking, what happens if dad doesn't welcome me back? But he's so desperate, he's prepared to try it.
- [11 : 51] But meanwhile, his father has been outside every single day. He's looking for him. Hoping. Believing. Trusting. I wonder. Just wonder. If my son will come home. And one day, he sees his youngest son walking in the distance.
- His son sees him waiting for him. And he prepares to put on the puppy dog eyes and begin his excuses. But while he's still walking up the street, his father runs to him.
- He hugs him. He embraces him. Welcomes him home. And then the son says, sorry. He says, I was rude to you.
- I ran away from home. I wasted all of your money. Dad, will you welcome me home? Will you forgive me? And the father says, of course I will.
- [13 : 00] You're my son and I love you. And they embrace. And they hug. And he says, you will always be my child.
- Welcome home, son. And the father throws his son a party. There is more to the story.
- But we're going to leave it there. Three stories. The lost sheep. The lost coin. And the lost son. The sheep went off to explore.

Didn't really know where it was going. And found itself lost. The coin might not have lost itself. But it shows the value of what it was worth.

The son, he chose to go off his own way. He knew exactly what he was leaving behind. And he did it anyway. But he also chose to come back.

[14 : 03] When we talk about living hope coming up to Easter. I think there's one verse. A familiar verse. That we can relate all of these stories back to.

In John 3.16. For God so loved the world. That he sent his one and only son. To die for you.

That whoever believes in him may not perish. But shall have eternal life with him. For God so loves you.

That he sent his one and only son. To be your living hope. To die for you. To take everything that we do wrong.

That we do selfishly. Hurtfully. Upon himself. So that we can be forgiven. The sheep couldn't find its own way back.

[15 : 07] It needed the shepherd to go and look. The coin can't just climb back up onto the table. It needed its owner to go and look.

The lost son made the decision to go home. But he was doubtful. He was questioning whether he was even going to be welcome there. It was the father who ran to him and welcomed him.

So what is your hope this Easter? Is it to have loads of chocolate? To finally be able to eat whatever it is you've been given up again?

To have a good time? Is our hope for the future to be able to do things for ourselves? To be able to provide everything that we need?

Or is our hope in Jesus? Because Easter is all about one thing. And that's what Jesus does on the cross.

[16 : 07] And on the third day when he rises from the dead. So I think Jesus is our living hope. We've got one more song to sing together.

This is the greatest day in history. We have a basket of instruments here. Some shakers that we would love anyone to come and grab them. And join in during this song.

Because as we've heard in these stories. As each thing or each person was found. They had a party. As each one of us puts our hope in Jesus.

God has a party in heaven. So let's be part of that party and celebration this morning. Grab some instruments. Make loads of noise. Dance if you want to.

Cheer if you want to. But let's celebrate as we sing this song together. So where is your hope this Easter?

[17 : 06] Is it in situations changing themselves? Is it in your own strength? Or is it in Jesus? We'd love to invite. If you want prayer.

Somebody to pray for you. We'd love to invite you to come down to the corner. Perhaps it's the first time you've thought about placing your hope in Jesus. Perhaps just particularly at the moment. Your hope is already in Jesus.

But you just need to reaffirm that. Because you really need to experience his hope this morning. We would love to invite you to come down to the corner to pray. Thank you.