

The God Who Seeks

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 July 2025

Preacher: Ife Ojetayo

[0:00] Of all our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord our rock and redeemer. Amen.! Please be seated.

I invite you to open your Bible to Luke 15, where we'll be this morning.! It's on page 1039 of your pew Bible.

This familiar parable, which we have for our Gospel reading this morning, is one of many. It's actually one parable that many of us can relate to, I think. Can you relate to losing things and having to find them? If you're married, perhaps you're thinking of your spouse and the many times she's misplaced her phone.

Or you've misplaced your car. I don't know what's going on here with our sound system this morning. I'll try to remain still as I speak.

[1:13] But if you're married, you probably can relate to the opt-in time your spouse has asked, you know, about where a friend is. Or you've misplaced your keys.

Of your man, just where that thing is in the fridge that's right before your eyes and you can't see and then she has to come and point it out to you. In our family, one of our sons is a bit of a wanderer. He wanders off when he's meant to stay put or keep up. And that means he's often lost. He's been lost far more often than any of his siblings.

I just realized that I phrased that in a way that makes it seem that we are often in the habit of losing our children. I assure you that's not true.

We once lost them, though, at the regional market. You guys, you've been to the regional market. You know that is not the ideal place to lose a child. I am going to turn this off.

[2:13] I'm going to move over there and preach my children this morning. If you will, I'm like, sorry about that noise. It's not the case. Ah. Can you hear me?

Is that what? Good. All right. We'll move this. All right. So, as I was saying, one of our sons is prone to being lost.

He's a wanderer. And we once lost him at the regional market. And if you're familiar with the place, I think many of you are, I'm sure you can imagine the panic and the anguish one feels at losing a little human being that is under three feet tall, amongst a crowd of hundreds of people, within multiple buildings.

You can also imagine the overwhelming joy, in our case, and relief at finding him. Well, if you can imagine that, I think of them, maybe they will give you a deeper perspective to our story this morning, a parable that our Lord told.

We must be careful, though, with our assumptions as we examine this parable. It's easy to put ourselves in the wrong person's shoes in this story.

[3:30] And in doing so, if we were to put ourselves in the wrong person's shoes, we would lose the meaning of our Lord's parable. And so, we must be careful then to look at what Luke the Evangelist wants us to see in this story.

And that's first and foremost, that we are the ones who are lost. And God is the one looking. I want to repeat that.

In this parable, what we're meant to see, first and foremost, is that we are the ones lost. And God is the one looking. This story is ultimately about lost people.

Not lost sheep or coins. And it is not a story to show us how to search for lost things. Instead, it shows us that God is the one who goes searching for lost people.

And rejoices when He finds them. This story, to put it in its proper context, began with a question that was put to Jesus in chapter 13, verse 23 of Luke's Gospel.

[4:36] When Jesus was asked, Will those who are saved be few? In other words, if there is such a thing as heaven, a new and a better Eden, if that place exists, food gets to be there.

Jesus' response to that question that was put to Him, is this. In verse 24, chapter 13, verse 24 of Luke's Gospel, Jesus responded to that question and says, Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter, and will not be able to. That's a very sobering answer, isn't it? To the question that was put to Jesus.

Jesus is saying, Entrance into His kingdom is not as easy as we think. The door is narrow. So make sure you're one of those who are in, Jesus says.

And Luke, further on in this section that we have, of this Gospel, shows us that there are two kinds of people. Those who assume they will get into heaven, and those who assume they cannot get in.

[5:48] In Jesus' day, those who assume they will have entrance into heaven, were the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes.

The ones who grumbled in verse 2 of our parable. They were grumbling, because Jesus was drawing to Himself, tax collectors, and sinners.

Tax collectors, were seen as dishonest, and dishonorable traitors, who made themselves rich, by polluting with the Roman Empire, the Roman oppressors, against their own people.

They were outcasts, in society. They were considered sinners. And then there's another group, tax collectors, and sinners. There were sinners there, that is a more expensive list, that includes those who were outcasts, in Jewish religious society.

Among those will be those who were living, in outward public sin, like prostitutes. But others are so good, as sinners among them.

[6:58] Those who were filled, perhaps, to meet the purity requirements, of the Pharisees. The extra-biblical laws, that have been posed, as burdens upon the people.

These notorious sinners, according to the Pharisees and scribes, would, those who would have never thought, of themselves worthy, or deserving of God's kingdom.

And it's these same people now, who are being welcomed, by the king. Welcomed in. Set a table with him.

To eat, and fellowship with him. These are the ones, whom the Lord called friends, and invited through the narrow door. Perhaps you can identify, with such people this morning, as you come, through the narrow door.

Into the Lord's house, to fellowship with him. Well, so these are the two, different kinds of people. Those who assumed, that they will be in the kingdom, are the ones, on the outside, grumbling, at Jesus' friendship, with these outcasts, that he has surrounded himself with.

[8:05] What they fail to see, is that, Jesus, comes, for, the sinners, and the outcasts, of which they are numbered, among them.

But they don't see that. They fail to hear, Jesus' warning, that he told them, those who have ears, let them hear. They refused, to hear, Jesus' words, of invitation.

And yet, they grumbled, when they were not invited in. Many people think, that they'll get into, God's kingdom, by having a high score.

That's what the Pharisees thought. As if, as if entrance, into the kingdom, is like an exam, one needs to pass. That's what the Pharisees thought. They looked at themselves. And they looked at the tax collectors, and sinners.

And they thought, my grade, is much better than theirs. I'm, I'm hastening this test. I have a passing grade. And these bozos, are failing.

[9:05] Maybe they didn't use the word, bozos. That's, you know. But these ones, are failing. Anyone, and everyone, can see that. So, what's wrong with this Jesus?

Why can't he see, what everyone sees? That I am much more, perfect, and righteous, and upstanding, than these tax collectors, and sinners. Of course, they, they utterly fail to realize, that the only, passing grade, is a perfect score.

If they had known this, they would have known, they didn't have, a perfect score. Jesus Christ alone, possesses a perfect score. Being the spotless lamb of God, who takes away, the sin of the world.

He, is the narrow door, through whom, all, Pharisees, and tax collectors alike, must pass through, to enter the kingdom. But, the tragedy, is that, one group, out of these two, one group, adheres to hear, this truth, that Jesus is proclaiming.

And, the others, the Pharisees, were on the outside, grumbling, because they didn't have, here to hear, the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, let's look further.

[10 : 25] This is, this is the setting, for this story, that Jesus tells. And so, Jesus continues in verse 3, and Luke tells us in verse 3. In response, to that, grumbling, Jesus tells this parable.

What a man, what a man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he had lost one of them, does not leave the 99, in the open country, and go after the one, that is lost, until he finds it.

And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together, his friends, and his neighbors, saying to them, rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep, that was lost.

And verse 8, Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, it does not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently, until she finds it.

And when she has found it, she calls together, her friends and neighbors, saying, rejoice with me, for I have found the coin, that I have lost. The central point, of these two parables, is that, God, is the one, who seeks out the lost.

[11 : 39] The sinners, and not the other way around. Earlier in Luke, Jesus said, the Son of Man, came to seek, and to save, the lost.

This of course, runs counter, this phrase, this notion, this reality, runs counter, to every human, religious system.

Man made religions, says, that man must make, his way to God. That's what man made religion, says. Man made religion, says, you might even allow, it might even allow, some religions, that we need God, to help us, make his way, make our way to him.

But it is ultimately, our journey, to me. That's what man made religion, says. And God then, waits to see, how far on the journey, we've made it.

But this parable, and the whole testimony, of the Bible, the Old and New Testament, alike, shows, that it is God, not us, who searches out, who comes on a journey, who comes towards us.

[12 : 52] He's the one, who goes seeking. We hide from God. We run from him. And yet, he seeks us out. He is unrelenting, in his love for us.

It is out of this love, that he seeks us out. God is the shepherd, who leads the 99, to seek out the one lost sheep. He's the woman, who, losing a silver coin, likes a lamb, shoots the whole house, until she finds it.

If you've once been lost, and now you've been found by him, think back on your journey. How often have you hid from him? Gone away into the far country, shut up your ears, to his core.

How often? And yet, I think as you trace, your life's journey, until now, you can see, all the places, where it is God, in fact, it is him, pursuing you.

Whether it's through, your parents, or parent, who prayed for you, and brought you, to the shepherd's feet. Whether it's through, that friend, who never shuts up, about how great a friend, she has in Jesus.

[14 : 13] Whether it's through, God bringing you, to the end of yourself, so you may turn to him. Whatever means, the Lord does, use to bring you, to himself.

It is him, pursuing you. It has always been him. Whatever path, your story took, one common thread, runs through it, for all of us, who have come to Jesus.

It is God, who sought us out. It is him, who found us. And when God, finds a lost son, or a lost daughter, and brings them home, there is great rejoicing.

That's what we're told, in this parable. We see it in both parables, don't we? In verse 7, just so I tell you, Jesus says, there will be more joy, in heaven.

More joy in heaven, over one sinner, who repents, and over 99 righteous persons, who need no repentance. In verse 10, just so I tell you, there is joy, before the angels of God, over one sinner, who repents.

[15 : 29] If you're in, that's how you got in. And if you want to get in, that's how you can't get in. It is through the narrow door, that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so Jesus says, strive to enter through the narrow door. The striving spoken of here, is not some sort of, warped righteousness. It's not self-righteousness, like the Pharisees.

That's not the striving, that is being told of here. The striving, is simply repentance. That's the work we need to do, in response, to the gospel, having ears to hear, hearing the message, the goodness of our salvation.

Repent. Hear the gospel, respond to the good news, with humble and repentant hearts. You see in this parable, that repentance, is the fundamental, necessary response, to hearing this gospel, of our salvation.

I don't know, what your view of God is, this morning. Maybe for so long, you've held on, to a wrong view, that all God wants, is to find an excuse, to damn you to hell.

[16 : 48] And he's got this big club, that he uses, to whack people in the head with. And he's just waiting, for you to fall, and so he can whack you. Maybe that's your view of God. But God's word says, that he's patient, towards you.

You see that in this parable. You see it in all of, God's word, its promises to us. St. Peter says this, in his epistle. God is patient, towards you. Not wishing that, you should perish, that any should perish.

But that all should, reach repentance. That is God's character. That is his heart. He does not delight, that any should perish. What, then, does God delight in?

What causes heaven, to celebrate, and to throw a party? It's when a lost sheep, or a lost coin, is found. When a lost child, comes over.

That's what brings rejoicing, to the heart of our heart. God, this is what delights God. This is the true heart of God, for you and me. He delights in us, being found.

[17 : 59] He sent his beloved son, for that very purpose. I want to say to you, this morning, if you're here today, and you haven't come to God, if you're here today, and you're not yet a Christian, first, I want to say, we're happy to have you among us.

First, we're always glad for you, to come and listen to God's word, and join our gathering. But second, I want to tell you, that God is searching for you. He's not hiding from you.

You may be hiding from him, but he's searching for you. He's not jumping, at the bit, to condemn you. Rather, it's the opposite. He loves you, and has come from the eye above, and far above, to find you.

Maybe you're here today, though, because you've sensed that call. You've heard his voice, calling out to you.

You know you're lost. And you're hoping, that he will find you. Find you. May I invite you, to answer that loving call, of the good shepherd, this morning.

[19 : 06] Come to me. That's what he says. Come to me, O wolf weary, and heavy laden. And I will give you rest. That's his promise to you.

He will give you rest. You will be rejoicing, when you come home. All of heaven, in fact, will be rejoicing. So come.

And maybe there are those, who grumble, maybe there are those, who are appalled, by the kind of people, whom Jesus calls to himself. Maybe like the Pharisees, they see these people, these tax collectors, around Jesus, and around table, with Jesus.

These two parables, show us, that perhaps, we have the wrong view of God. Doesn't it? It shows, it shows us, that God is not, trying to keep people out.

Rather, he rejoices, to welcome people in. Sin is all, that we are. Whatever our past may be, whatever our sins may be, we're all sinners.

[20 : 23] None of us have, we all have feeling great. But, God, he longs, to welcome us. And he, washes our sins away, with all the, shame and guilt.

He washes it away. And the blood of his son, Jesus Christ, shed for us. He makes us, new creation. He adopts us, as sons. That's a technical word.

All of us, male and female, he adopts his sons, because all these sons, inherit. And so, he adopts us, as coheres with Christ. He makes us, new creation.

He rejoices over us. This is the heart of God. This is the picture of, of God. This is the heart of the God, who found you, brought you to himself. And if you're a lost sheep, who's wandered away, from the cold.

If you're in the far country, I plead with you, to come back this morning. If you've been found by God, then join God then. If you know, that you were once a lost sheep, which all of us were, and you've been found by God, then, join God, in seeking after the lost.

[21 : 43] Enter into God's search party. That's what the Church of Christ, ought to be. That's who we are. We're God's search party. Looking for the lost.

Calling them home. Enter into God's search party. Don't despise, that your God, is a God who seeks after the lost.

Don't be like the Pharisees, and the scribes. My prayer is that this church, our church, may be a way station, where people who are bruised by sin, who are bruised by the world, who are bruised by the devil, can be welcomed in, with the same loving heart of God, that welcomes the lost home. May this church, be such a way station. May we, ambassadors of Christ, be such people, as we go out into the world. calling people home, welcoming them home.

May we be a church, that joins heaven. May we be a people, that joins heaven, in rejoicing, over the lost sheep, and the lost coin. Let us pray.

[23 : 06] Loving Father, we thank you, that you are loving God, who calls us to yourself. We know that, in our sin, away from you, hiding from you, you sought us out.

You found us. You brought us home. We thank you, for this great salvation. Help us Lord, to be, to have your heart, the same heart, for the lost.

That we will be willing, and eager, to go out searching, proclaiming the gospel, of Jesus Christ. And that when those, like us, who were formerly lost, come home, we will welcome them, with open arms, into the love, and embrace, of our Father God.

We pray this, in Jesus name. Amen.