

Lost Things

Luke 15:1–10

Introduction: Losing Stuff

There's nothing quite like the feeling of losing something. We lose our keys, our phones, our wallets. Sometimes they're right in front of us, but we tear the house apart anyway. We lose socks in the washing machine—whole empires of missing socks exist somewhere in the universe.

But it's not just little things we lose. We lose jobs. We lose people we love. We lose our health. We lose hair. We lose our perky bodies. Some of us lose our sense of humor. And sometimes, as the saying goes, we just plain *lose it*.

You know what I mean—those moments when you're overwhelmed, tired, and someone just pushes the wrong button. Maybe it's in traffic. Maybe it's when your computer decides to update right before your Zoom meeting. You snap, and you “lose it.”

So yes—we know all about lost things.

But sometimes, losing can be good. It's good to lose our arrogance, our certainty that we've got it all figured out. It's good to lose our self-righteousness, our preoccupation with things that don't really matter. Some things need to be lost so that we can be found.

The Text: Stories of Lost Things

In Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables about lost things. We didn't hear all three this morning, just the first two. But you know the third one—it's the big one, the blockbuster—the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

But today we heard the prelude: two smaller stories.

A shepherd has 100 sheep. One goes missing. He leaves the 99 behind and searches high and low until he finds the one. And when he does, he calls his friends and neighbors and throws a party.

A woman has ten coins. One rolls away into some dark corner. She lights a lamp, sweeps the whole house, searches diligently until she finds it. And when she does, she calls her friends and neighbors and throws a party.

Lost things. Found things. Joy. Celebration.

What Do These Stories Tell Us About God?

At the most basic level, these parables tell us that God cares about lost things. God searches for them. God rejoices when they are found.

And this is good news because it means that God cares about us. When we are lost, when we've wandered, when we've misplaced ourselves, God does not shrug and say, "Oh well, one down, ninety-nine to go." No, God goes looking.

Think about that. In a world where people misplace one another all the time—forgetting the vulnerable, discarding the inconvenient, ignoring the powerless—God refuses to lose track of us.

The Problem of "Othering"

But here's the catch. In church, we sometimes think these parables are about other people. We talk about "the lost" as though they're "out there." As though the sheep wandering off is always someone else. As though the coin rolled under the couch cushions belongs to another household.

Sociologists call this *othering*—the act of defining certain people as "the lost ones," the outsiders, the ones with problems. And if they are "the lost," then what does that make us? The found, the good, the safe ones.

But if we're honest, that's not true. We get lost too. We don't always know the way home. We stumble. We wander. We lose ourselves in anger, in busyness, in distraction. We lose it when we're overwhelmed. We lose sight of what matters.

And when we think "lostness" is always about other people, we miss the point of the parable.

We Are the Lost

The reality is that we are all the lost ones. None of us have the map. None of us have perfect vision. We all need finding.

And here's the deeper truth: it's not just that we were lost once, a long time ago, and then found, and now we're fine. No—we keep getting lost. We're excellent at it. We lose our way again and again.

But here's the good news: God keeps finding us.

That line from Charles Wesley's hymn says it beautifully:

*"Tis mystery all, immense and free,
for oh, my God, it found out me."*

Yes, God found me once. But it's even more wonderful that God keeps finding me—every single day of my life. Because I keep getting lost. I keep losing it. And God keeps seeking me, finding me, lifting me, rejoicing over me.

God's Joy in Finding

And that's the other stunning part of the parable: the joy. God doesn't grumble when we're found. God doesn't say, "Well, look who finally showed up. Took you long enough."

No, God celebrates. God throws a party. Heaven rejoices. Angels sing.

Imagine the God of the universe dancing with joy because you—lost, frazzled, stumbling you—were found. That's the picture Jesus paints.

What Does This Mean for Us?

So what do we do with this?

1. We Stop “Othering.”

We stop thinking the lost are always other people. We admit that we too are lost and in need of grace. That humbles us and makes us compassionate.

2. We Join the Search.

If God cares this much about lost things, then we are called to care too. We don't get to write people off, discard them, or shrug our shoulders. We search, we notice, we welcome.

3. We Learn to Celebrate.

Sometimes churches are not very good at celebrating. We're better at frowning. But the kingdom of God is like a party when the lost are found. Our calling is to rejoice whenever grace breaks through—whether it's in our own lives or in the lives of others.

Conclusion: The God Who Finds

Friends, we are people of lost things. We lose socks and keys. We lose our tempers and our way. We lose jobs and loves and health. Sometimes we even lose hope.

But the God revealed in Jesus Christ is the God who searches for lost things, who rejoices when they are found, who never gives up on us.

So the good news is not just that God once found us, long ago, but that God keeps finding us—every single day.

*Tis mercy all, immense and free,
for oh, my God, it found out me.*

And it keeps finding me. Thanks be to God. Amen.