

Let's Celebrate!

9.11.16

Luke 15:1-10 New Living Translation (NLT)

15 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. **2** This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

3 So Jesus told them this story: **4** *“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? **5** And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. **6** When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’*

7 *In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!*

8 *“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins[a] and loses one. Won’t she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? **9** And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.’ **10** In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels when even one sinner repents.”*

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God.

People: Thanks be to God.

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Attention - Story of finding the lost

For the past few weeks, we have considered what it means to live as a Follower of Jesus. These stories in the gospel have given us a glimpse of what it looks like:

live in humility as we extend hospitality.

open our doors to ALL people.

thoroughly examine the cost of being a follower of Jesus

This morning, we come to these familiar stories Jesus told that were triggered by these comments by the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law, about Him, *“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*

You see, He was surrounded by tax collectors and other sinners, who wanted to listen to Him.

Now, in Jesus’ day, most people didn’t really like tax collectors. They worked for the Romans, and often were greedy and unjust. Some of them became very wealthy, like Zacchaeus. (Luke 19 2)

In response to the Pharisees’ complaint, Jesus told three similar stories. Each of them dealt with something being lost and then found.

This morning we look at two of the stories. The third story is about a Father who had two Sons. One realized he was lost and the other had no idea.

Rev. Dr. Sam Persons Parkes: "The Pharisees had a pretty good idea of lost and found, sinner and righteous. (And although), the Pharisees have gotten a pretty bum rap for the last 2,000 years, (they) are not demons. In fact, in Jesus' day, they wore the white hats among the average folk. They were the people you wanted for neighbors. God-fearing and law-abiding. Righteous. And Jesus had no problem with that. Jesus never scolded the Pharisees for being good. Jesus was upset that the only face of God that the righteous wanted to show to the sinner was, at worst, stern, angry, and unwelcoming, or, at best, (one that) ignored them in their lostness."

So here's the problem:

"religious people" tend to assume "that they are found and that the non-religious are lost."

But Parkes suggests that, by the end of this chapter we each will ask, "*Just who is lost here and who is found?*"

Parkes seems to be implying that we consider how we as the "*righteous, church- attenders, and good deed-doers might actually be lost.*" (Rev. Dr. Sam Persons Parkes)

David Lose poses the question this way:

"Might the parents who want their children to succeed so much that they wrap their whole lives around hockey games and dance recitals be lost? Might the career minded man or woman who has made moving up the ladder the one and only priority be lost? Might the folks who work jobs they hate just to give their family things they never had be lost? Might the senior who has a great pension plan but little sense of meaning since retirement be lost?"

Might the teen who works so hard to be perfect and who is willing to do just about anything to fit in be lost? Might the earnest Christian who is constantly asking whether people have accepted Jesus into their hearts be lost?" (David J. Lose, "Lost," *Dear Working Preacher*, September 9, 2013;

[http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?m=4377&post=2737.](http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?m=4377&post=2737))

Could it be that "those of us who work so hard in the church, (who do so much for the Lord) be among the lost?" Hmmm... When was the last time you had a spiritual awakening?

Parkes suggests, that maybe "*we are a lonely lamb in a thicket.*" Or perhaps, we are a "*little coin, (that's) rolled behind God's great refrigerator.*"

Could it be that the things we see in "lost" people (apathy, addictions, depression) are merely the product of the amnesia of our own struggles or one's expression of a desire for direction?"

Parkes: "Maybe we are more lost than we imagined." (Rev. Dr. Sam Persons Parkes)

Maybe God is simply waiting on us to realize that we are lost.

Jesus tells these stories: "Suppose someone among you had a hundred sheep and lost one of them. Wouldn't he leave the other ninety-nine in the pasture and search for the lost one until he finds it?"

"Are you CRAZY? Would you really do that?" Probably NOT! Some of us may be fine to cut our losses.

And what about calling the neighbors to come for a celebration. Parkes: "Is this reasonable?" Is that what you do whenever you lose your keys, or when your dog gets loose? Do you throw a barbecue for the neighbors? Probably not. You may have just breathed a sigh of relief and went on. OR, you might've been so ashamed about the losing that you didn't want to draw attention to the finding!"

And "What woman with ten days of pay isn't going to look for that \$100 bill she lost? Each of us would do the same! But when SHE finds, it she is so happy that she spends \$300 on the party with her friends to celebrate! What? That's a little crazy. But that is our God."

"These are not stories about how lost we are. Rather, it is a picture of what God is like and *what God likes*. And what God likes, is creating that moment of turning, of revelation. That moment when we realize that we, too, are lost. Then to you and to me, God says, "*I found you! Let's celebrate!*" (Rev. Dr. Sam Persons Parkes)

In Jesus, God says to all of us lost, "*I am here with you. I am at the margins. You don't believe in me? That's okay. I believe in you. I am with you, and I love you no matter what. And what I love is when you become willing to let me change your heart and life.*"

So how do you live as a disciple who changes the world? Parkes: "It begins when you get curious about other people. You don't have to ignore people. You could simply invite them for coffee, with no agenda; just listen to them. Just be present. Could that be God at work searching the thickets and sweeping the floor? Maybe. You could move outside your places of ministry and see God at work in very unlikely places.

Think about Jesus. "A simple teacher who the ultimate finder, the one who searched through the thickets. He is the finder. And he has you slung over his shoulders, and he is laughing! I found her! I found him! I found you! Let's Celebrate!

"Jesus sought the lost in all sorts of unlikely places. He offended the religious leaders by eating with the lost - those who were not righteous, not clean, not good. Jesus is the great physician, and a physician does not set a broken arm from across the street; He goes where the patient is. Jesus seeks us in our lostness. Being found is simply coming home, finding our roots once again, or for the first time." (Bruce Larson, The Communicator's Commentary, vol. 3, Luke, © 1983, Word, Inc; ch. 31, "Lost and Found," p. 229)

It is one thing to offer forgiveness to the one who comes and begs for mercy. but it is quite another thing that God diligently searches for the lost ones in order to forgive them.

This is the kind of love that prompted Jesus to come and fulfill His mission: to seek and save the lost. (Life Application Notes - Luke 15)

We are called to be Followers of Jesus Christ.
As the Church, the Body of Christ, our Mission is:

To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ, to seek and save the lost.
When the Lost are Found, God is the One Who says: "Let's Celebrate!"