

**Sermon on Being Lost**  
**Luke Fifteen 1-10**

I don't have any experience with finding lost sheep, but I do know a thing or two about finding lost cows and I know that going after one cow is one of the worst possible scenarios you can have! They have no sense as to where they are; so when you start chasing her back to where she belongs—she runs in every direction except for the one you want her to go! And if you've left the rest of the herd unguarded and close by; when they hear this lone cow bellowing—they'll soon be following her!

So when Jesus asks at the beginning of this parable; "Which one of you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine **in the wilderness** and go after the one that is lost until you find it?" I would have to say that I wouldn't! It would be foolish to leave the others unguarded to look for just one! But God does! And then God throws a party!

The next parable at first seems to be a little more realistic and helpful—at first. Which one of us hasn't searched high and low; not stopping until we've found the money we've misplaced somewhere in our home. It just seems prudent to keep looking for it until we find it. But then how many of us will invite all of our friends and neighbors to a party that costs more than what the coin is worth to help us celebrate finding the coin? We wouldn't, but God does!

Nobody with any sense would leave ninety-nine sheep alone to go and look for one. Nobody with any sense would look for a lost coin and then throw a party with their friends costing more than the found coin was worth. Nobody that is—except God! When it comes to God searching for God's lost, confused, and

hurting children; God has no sense. God risks everything to find them—to find us! And then once God finds us; God gives everything again to celebrate!

There's only one word to describe such absurd behavior—desperate! God is desperate for us—desperate to find us, to redeem us, to bring us back into God's everlasting and abundant love. I read that a parent is only as happy as their least happy child. Now apply this to the God that we call Father. Is it any wonder that Jesus says that there is more rejoicing in heaven when a single sinner repents than ninety-nine of the righteous? The more lost that we are, the greater the cause for celebration when we are found. To put it in a different context; to recover from a painfully broken elbow is great, but when you recover from cancer it's incredibly, unbelievably great news!

So God comes in Jesus looking for all of us lost children and God invites those of us who are found to do the same. You see, at least according to these parables, there's not much that you can do when you're lost. There's no formula, no rules, not even a sinners prayer for us to recite because most of the time we don't even realize that we're lost! Think about that cow for a moment. If she's in the middle of a lush alfalfa field she doesn't think she's lost; she thinks she's in heaven! Or what child having wandered off from you while in a store; when you finally find them answers your question about where were they, by saying, "I was right here."

All of us are going to be lost at some point in our life and most of the time we won't know it. But we will know when we've been found and that God loves and cares for us. And while there isn't much we can do while we're lost; there's all

kinds of things that we can do once we've been found. We can tell, share, give thanks—in other words we can rejoice! The primary character of the Christian life isn't being moral, or repentant, or obedient. While these things are all good—they just aren't primary. The primary character of a Christian is one of joy—deep and abiding joy. Joy that comes from knowing that once we were lost and now we are found! It's the joy we saw last week on the kids' faces as they came back to Sunday school and found out that we had a banana split bar for them!

That joy can be easy to forget at times. The Pharisees forgot it and so they chastised Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners. They remembered the importance of morality, repentance and obedience, but they forgot about the joy of being found. So when life starts to crowd in on you remember this—you are a beloved child of God and God rejoices over you!