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Lost and Found
Luke 15:1-10

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*Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “**This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.**”*

*³ So he told them this parable: ⁴ “**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 he finds it?** ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘**Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.**’ ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be **more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.** ⁸ “Or what woman having ten silver coins,^[a] if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘**Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.**’ ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is **joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.**”*

I once read about a wife who ‘**lost something**’ of her husband’s at church one Sunday. She dropped her purse in the aisle, and a large TV remote came rolling out.... the usher asked her, do you always bring your remote to church with you? Oh, she said, this is my husband’s. He refused to come to church today, so this is the worst thing I could do to him...

You know what it’s like to **LOSE** something, or someone, and then to **REJOICE** when you find it?

What was the last thing YOU lost?

Keys? Glasses? papers?

And how did you FEEL when you found it?

There's joy in that moment, right?

Ever lost something precious, like a **wedding ring**?

I remember my heart stopped when I lost mine years ago.

I had laid it down on a comforter, and then I went on to do something else, and when I realized what had happened, they were gone.

I looked everywhere!

Somehow, a few days later, I was looking into a bag hanging a few feet away, and there, as some light was coming in through the window,

I could see something shiny.

And it was the ring!

Apparently it had flown through the air, into this purse a few feet away.

I busted out laughing and was so relieved and thrilled when I saw them.

I did rejoice!

It's horrible to lose something **sentimental**....

or something you **need right away**....

like your car keys, or your contact lens...

And what about **losing a child in a store**?

I remember losing my son when he was a toddler

in a crowded store at Christmas time, with all the sights and sounds....

he wandered off, not even aware that he was lost.

Meanwhile my heart stopped, and I couldn't breathe.

I was yelling for him, and frantically searching.

And those 5 minutes seemed like an eternity--

until I spotted him wandering through the store without me.....

and then I was overcome with relief and joy

when I could finally breathe again as I scooped him up in my arms!

We **know** what it's like to lose something or someone, don't we?

and we know what it **feels like to REJOICE** when we find it, right?

So, Jesus seems to be **tapping into those feelings**....

That rejoicing over something found!

But then he turns it **all upside down**.

Because these stories of a lost sheep and a lost coin---

Are strange, aren't they?
 I mean sure, a sheep and a coin are important,
 but **not SO important** that you drop everything to find them....
 or throw a party, right?

These are **STRANGE** stories that don't fit with typical life today, or back then.
 Jesus' original audience would have likely been scratching their heads.

Why?

Because these stories are **parables**, with layers of meaning.
 And, these stories are told as a response to Jesus' criticism
 of the Scribes and Pharisees,
 who cannot believe that He loves sinners!

But from his earliest days, Jesus hangs out with sinners!
 So Jesus tells these stories, to kind of say
'you wanna know how much I love sinners? Listen to this!'

So often we read the Bible as a '**how to**' manual.
 Or a '**don't do this**' list of rules and regulations.
 But the Bible, and especially Jesus' parables, are often stories—
 of '**how God does**' it.

These lost stories are primarily about **God's character, NOT OURS!**
 Jesus makes that pretty clear in his 'tongue in cheek' introduction:
*'which of you if having a hundred **sheep** does not leave the ninety-nine to go
 after the one until he finds it?' And when he finds it, carries it on his shoulders
 home, to rejoice with friends?*

What???

Jesus—are you kidding? NO ONE.

No one does this!

You don't go all out for 1 lost sheep.

You count your blessings for the remaining 99!

And then Jesus tells a second story.

*'Or what woman having ten silver **coins**, and loses **ONE**, does not light a lamp,
 and sweep the entire house until she finds it, and then throws a party?'*

What??

NO ONE losing one little coin does this!

We don't throw parties over one found coin.

The party would cost far more than all ten coins!

But these are not stories about what WE should do----

these are stories about the **character of God**.

These are the lengths God goes to, to find and save the lost.

This is the **joy** God has when one lost person is found.

And it's a joy that we are invited to experience!

Which is why we are telling these stories on Holy Humor Sunday!

These are stories of Joy!

And they get us thinking about **WHAT causes us to REJOICE**.

Do we rejoice when we find Jesus?

Do we rejoice when **others find Him?**

The numbers in these stories are meaningful.

100 and 10 were considered **complete**, or whole numbers,

so....to have one missing was to be **incomplete**.

The sheepfold and the coin collection were incomplete,

and Jesus says he wants to make them **whole again**.

This is how far God will go to make our community complete, and us whole!

That's a **different take on the lost and found**, isn't it?

And what if, we ARE the lost sheep and lost coin?

Aren't there times when we fall away from our faith,

Or away from our community?

I frequently talk to people who have **fallen away from the church**,

Because they've been hurt, or disillusioned, or just....lost.

And I love to tell them **how excited God is**

to welcome them back into the community of faith!

Because God is the kind of God

who goes all out to find us! And bring us home!

We talk a lot about ***US looking for God***, or trying to find God,
When the truth is, God is often the one ***looking for us!***

Think about that for a minute!

We believe in a God who ***goes out looking for us!!!***

The God of the universe, of all creation,
the God who knows the number of hairs on our heads and days of our lives,
THAT God goes out looking for us?!?

Isn't that AMAZING?

I mean, sometimes we are just like my son at Christmas time in the store.

We let go of God's hand, and we ***don't even know we're lost!***

We're so busy looking around at all the world has to offer,

And all the time God is calling our name,

Wanting to bring us home.

When have you been—lost and you didn't even know it?

Sometimes we're like the ***lost coin***,

That's fallen down into the sofa cushions,

And we can't do anything to get ourselves out!

We can only wait for God to find us, pick us up,

and then—throw a party about our return!

These are good news stories.

Have you ever felt ***hopeless*** about your situation?

Ever felt-- lost?

Like you're ***just waiting on God to show up?***

Well, God is looking for you!

Aren't we all like the ***lost sheep*** at one time or another?

And God leaves the others to find us---

and, then, throws a party in our honor!

Talk about amazing grace!

It's just like the hymn,

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me....

I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see!

Do you ever remember feeling lost....and then being found by God?

Or are you *feeling lost* right now?

There's so much hope for us!
 There is so much joy to be found!
 Because **God wants to find us! And bring us to a** community of believers, a family of faith,
 a place where we belong!

That's the kind of God we have...**a God of amazing GRACE.**
 A God who **looks for every one** of us when we are lost...
 And then rejoices when we are found!

Jesus says **there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.**
*(Now that's real irony, because the 99 don't really exist!
 Everyone needs repentance!)*

This is the kind of God we have...
 a God who wants to **bring people in,**
 And make the community whole, and complete.
 A God who knows that without the lost ones—**WE are not whole.**
 And truth be told, **we are ALL lost at one time or another.**

I have a T-shirt that says "**the church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints**".
 It's true.
 Jesus came for lost, and **broken people,** like us.
 And he's thrilled when we are found!

In Luke 5, when asked **why** he eats and drinks with sinners,
Jesus says, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick I have come to call to repentance.
 In other words, **Jesus came for broken people,** like us.

You know, I love our church.
 Because Presbyterians are big on God's **grace.**
 We believe in **welcoming all people,** just like Jesus did.
 We believe in creating community. Like he did.
 We believe that we are called to **live out** God's grace in our lives,

and in our church.

How are we doing with that?

Jesus' whole life, and death was about GRACE.

Jesus brought the sinners, the women,
the broken and marginalized people
into the center of his ministry,
and he allowed them to do ministry with him.

And when he told stories like the lost sheep and coin,
he was talking about ***INCLUDING*** people, not excluding them.

Don't you know it causes God such ***sorrow***,
to see all these ***divisions*** in the church today, based on who is 'out'?
Maybe we should ***spend much more time bringing all people 'in'!***

If we were a church that excluded broken people, I could not be ***your pastor***.
Because I am broken, and flawed.
We all are.

And if ***God goes all out*** for the 1 lost sheep or 1 lost coin,
Shouldn't we also show that kind of grace?

And shouldn't we ***rejoice***—
when even one of us is found?

Friends, hear the ***Good News of the Gospel:***
There's ***joy in heaven*** over one person who is found,
So may there be ***joy in church*** when any of us gets closer to Jesus!
And for that joy, all God's people can say together,
Amen.