

EASTER | Lost and Found

Rob Rogers April 9, 2023

Introduction

How many of you have ever lost the remote control for your tv?

- I don't think this is just me... but have you ever noticed, if the remote is lost and there are other people around, all of sudden you just lose any semblance of trust in anyone else in the room? You just start thinking the worst about everyone else... you even begin to interrogate them. "You're sitting on it aren't you?" "No?" "I don't believe you, stand up." You start tearing the cushions apart...

But have you ever lost something of real value? Not the remote... but something priceless and precious to you?

PERSONAL: I have four kids, three girls and a boy, and my older girls play tennis. For one of their matches last year, we all loaded up as a family to go watch them play. After a while into the match, we realize we don't know where Jack (our youngest) is... we know he was in the car with us.

So, I began to look for him, not overly concerned (*partially because he's the youngest*).

Sidenote: Because listen, when you have four... the first one or two you're meticulous about everything, just always in protection mode... making sure they're eating all the right food with no added garbage in it, always on the lookout for danger. But, by the time the 4th comes around you're just like, "Oh he's eating gravel? He'll be fine."

So I'm thinking, "*Okay we're in a tennis complex, he couldn't have gone far*" ... and after looking for what felt like an hour... probably 20 minutes and not finding him... we're really concerned. So, we enlisted the help of a few others. At this point, we're starting to get panicked... and eventually we found him sitting on top of a very loud HVAC unit, playing on an iPad, and totally hidden behind a hedge of protection... so, it was biblical.

- But the relief we felt, when we found Him... it's like all of a sudden we'd realized that we'd stopped breathing and now we could breathe again.
- *That's how it feels when you lose something of real value, and you find it again.*

Today, we're going to look at three specific parables where Jesus teaches us something so profound about God's heart for lost things.

Luke, who wrote the book of Luke, recorded these writings as a historical record for his friend Theophilus. **Luke was absolutely meticulous in how he recorded and represented, not only the character of Jesus but also the claims of Jesus. What Luke records in Luke 15 is how Jesus described the purpose for which He entered into the human story.**

And before the Parables, Luke gives us some context...

Luke 15:1

Now the **tax collectors** and **sinner**...

Tax collectors we're so despised that they had their own category of evil. It was worse than just a sinner... a common mentality in first century Israel was, "At least I'm not a tax collector."

- **PERSONAL:** We're very open about things in our family, so I'm very open with my kids about my years of drug addiction before I came to know Jesus. As we're navigating the teenage years and what freedoms they do and do not have... occasionally this phrase will come out, "Well, at least I'm not a drug addict..." and then they'll all look at me, like, "Am I right?"

But that's the Tax Collectors — culturally speaking — the worst of the worst. Many, especially the religious people, considered the tax collectors and sinners hopelessly separated from God.

Luke 15:1-2

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Him. And the Pharisees and the scribes **grumbled**, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

- In other words, "If Jesus were really holy, these people would be avoiding him like they avoid us. And He would be avoiding them, like we avoid them. He can't be from God." And they're assigning guilt by association.
 - ... ***If Jesus had any concern at all about guilt by association, He would've just stayed in heaven...***
 - There are tax collectors and sinners — and then there are the self-righteous religious people all listening in... Then Jesus teaches the Three Parables.

THE LOST SHEEP THE LOST COIN THE LOST SONS

The Lost Sheep

Luke 15:3-4

So He told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?"

Now, one thing that is true is that sheep are cute, they're valuable, they're very important... and what's also true is that sheep can be kind of stupid. Here are two examples... **Watch Video online...**

Sheep get themselves into situations. Of all the places you could go, why the ditch? Of all the things you could wander off and do... why this?

Jesus' listeners knew that a good shepherd will always go find the one lost sheep; a good shepherd doesn't console himself with the 99 he does have... he leaves the 99 who are safe and protected to go find the one that is ***vulnerable and alone***.

PERSONAL: Do you know what I *didn't* do whenever I realized one of our children was missing at the tennis complex. I did *not* say, "Oh it's okay, at least I still have three more kids." ***I didn't console myself by thinking about what wasn't lost. I became obsessive, laser focused on finding what WAS lost.***

What a shepherd does with a wayward sheep when they find it, is to bind its legs together, throw it over his shoulders, and carry it back to the sheepfold. Or else it will just run off and jump into another ditch.

Luke 15:5-7

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.' 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.

- What Jesus is saying here, *and this infuriated the self-righteous religious people* is that God views **lost people** as so inherently valuable, that all of heaven rejoices when they're found.

The Lost Coin

Luke 15:8-10

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, 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 had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is **joy before the angels of God** over **one sinner** who **repents**."

- Bible scholar Warren Wiersbe notes that "When a Jewish girl married, she began to wear a headband of ten silver coins to signify that she was now a wife, it's the first β century Jewish version of a wedding ring..."¹ You know how panicked you get if you've lost or misplaced your wedding ring?
 - This woman would have been mortified had she not found the coin. When she finds it, it's the reason for her celebration!

And Jesus tells us in both of these parables that not only is God set on pursuing and finding what's been lost... but look at the claim Jesus makes here... "The angels rejoice over one sinner that repents, there's more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner repenting, and coming back to God..."

- **Jesus is claiming, "I know how things are up there. I know what it's like. I've come down from a place where everything and everyone erupts in praise and celebration when one sinner, when one unrighteous person, when one lost person is found."**

Claims like this are one of the things that got Him crucified.

The Lost Sons

Luke 15:11-12

And he said, "There was a man who had **two sons**. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.'

- This is the equivalent of wishing his own father dead so he can get his inheritance now, and go do what he really wants to do...
 - Both groups listening to this would have been mortified... this young man is wishing his father dead! This young man should be stoned to death, or at least punished in a severe way for his disrespect toward his own father.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe. *Be Courageous*. (David C. Cook, 1989) p. 23

Luke 15:12

And he divided his property between them.

Why in the world would the father do that for a son that had just wished him dead?

You can't force relationship. You can create the conditions for it, you can do your part of the equation, but you can't make someone have a relationship with you.

- **He knew the relationship was dead.** And the only way it could come back to life was the let the son go.

The son takes the money, and in a matter of months, he wastes what it took his father a lifetime to save. Then a famine hits, and the young man is broke, working on a pig farm, (*which to the Jewish people would have been repulsive*) and he finds himself so hungry that he's looking at the pig food, "That's starting to look pretty good!"

The son comes to His senses, "What am I doing with my life? Who have I become? I despise the things I'm doing; my priorities are all out of whack and I'm so disappointed in myself."

The son comes to his senses, and says...

Luke 15:18-20

I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants." And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt **compassion**, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

- The son begins his speech, "Father I'm not worthy to be your son." The father just ignores it.

Luke 15:22-24

But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was **dead**, and is **alive** again; he was **lost**, and is **found**.' And they began to celebrate.

This father is *so for* his lost son, longing to love him and bless him, and welcome him home... He's not angry, vengeful, disappointed... He's just grateful that his son is alive... and he has great compassion on Him, runs to him! Throws a party for him!

- **APP:** If you're lost, if you've wandered, even if you've willfully rebelled against God... this is how your Heavenly Father feels about you... this is His heart for you. The second you take one step toward Him; He's not standing there angry — He's been looking for you — and He will run to you and embrace you *as soon as you take one step*.

But that's not the end of the story. There's the older brother. Well behaved, always obedient, always doing what's right. He comes back from working in the field and there's this huge party going on! One of the servants says, "Remember your brother... he came home, your father is throwing a party for him."

Already, you can feel the tension building in the story... this isn't going to go well... and it doesn't. The older brother refuses to go in, he's outside, sulking. Seething. So the father comes out and pleads with him... begs him, come join the party! Look what the older brother says...

Luke 15:29-30

Look, these many years **I have served** you, and **I never disobeyed** your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this **son of yours** came, who has **devoured** your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!

- The bitterness, the resentment the older brother had not only toward the younger son, but toward the father. The father responds... pleading with him.

Luke 15:31-32

And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this **your brother** was **dead**, and is **alive**; he was **lost**, and is **found**.’”

Jesus is painting a picture for the self-righteous pharisees, “*You all are just as lost as the tax collectors and sinners... but you can’t see it, your pride and self-righteousness has made you blind. **Self-righteousness will always cripple your self-awareness.***”

Pride will always skew your perspective.

You think you’re found, but you’re just as lost as they are...”

APPLICATION: If in your heart you’re thinking, “*Yeah, go get ’em Jesus! Those self-righteous, uptight, religious snobs... they’re detestable — thank God I’m not like THOSE people.*”

- *Hate to break it to you, but you just became “THOSE people.”* You’ve just become self-righteous about your lack of self-righteousness!

Do you see the heart of the Father?

Do you see the heart of this Father!?

- **Pleading with the self-righteous** to humble themselves and join the party.
- The heart of a father, dividing up his inheritance for a son that was wishing him dead... **letting the relationship go** in hopes that it would return one day...
- The woman, **scouring the whole house**... looking for that one lost, overlooked, coin
- The Good Shepherd, **leaving the 99 to go find the one** wandering, lonely sheep.

In every one of these parables, Jesus is revealing to us the heart of God for lost things!

Who are you like?

THE LOST SHEEP: You’re not sure exactly how, but slowly, you’ve just drifted away from Jesus... you’ve been wandering in darkness, in storm after storm, and no matter how hard you try, you just can’t seem to find your way back home.

THE LOST COIN: Maybe through the carelessness of someone in your life... you were wounded. Maybe by the church, or someone who claimed to know God, or someone you looked up to or trusted, and you’ve fallen through the cracks.

Maybe you sneak into the service late, and you sneak out early, so you don’t have to engage with anyone. You absolutely hate the meet and greet time in the service... but you’d, say, “*I’m isolated. I’m alone. I feel completely overlooked and forgotten.*”

THE REBELLIOUS SON: Maybe you’re a bit like I was, “*Wasting your life on sinful living... escaping from reality, or numbing your pain, through substances and empty relationships... throwing yourself at anything and everything that you think will make you feel better.*” But in the end, you’re still empty... you’re *settling for scraps, when your Father is calling you home, to welcome you in as a son, a daughter.. to give you have a seat at His table.*

THE RELIGIOUS BROTHER: Or maybe you identify with the **self-righteous older brother...** you avoid all the bad things and try really hard to do all the good things so that God will accept, approve of you.

- You've worked so hard, for so long — and without even realizing it, you've become bitter toward God. You've become judgmental, even scornful toward anybody else that doesn't know as much as you do, that doesn't try as hard as you do. But there's no joy, because you've forgotten the heart of God for you.

God is telling you through these parables — “I’m a God that scourts the earth for what has been lost. Because YOU are My highest treasure! YOU are My most prized possession. I came down for YOU, my life for YOU, my death for YOU! I came searching for you! To FIND what was LOST.”

Luke 19:10

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

- He's saying, *“If you're the **lost sheep**, I'm the shepherd who is out in the storm, searching until I find you, and when I find you, you can rest on me, on my shoulders, and I'll do all the work to carry you home.”*
- *“If you're the **lost coin**, I'm the woman scouring the whole house, bringing light into the cracks and crevices, sweeping the whole house until I find you. Other people might have forgotten about you, but not Me. **My thoughts toward you outnumber the grains of sand...** I've never stopped thinking about you, I've never stopped looking for you, and I won't stop until I find you.”*
- *“If you're the **self-righteous older brother**, filled with bitterness and pride, I've come to plead with you to simply humble yourself and come on in, you don't know what you're missing! You've forgotten who you are, and what you have... but I'm here to remind you. You're always with me, and everything I have is yours.*
- *“If you're **the rebellious son**, I'm the true older brother who left the Father's house to come find you, not to shame you, not to tell you how awful you are... but to enter into the mess with you, to pick you up, and bring you home.”*

IMPORTANT: *The father, sacrificed his estate, his possessions, his wealth, just to gain the slimmest chance that his son might come home one day...*

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate the reality that Jesus Christ, who is the perfect representation of the Father, didn't just lay down his wealth or possessions — but sacrificed His very life so that one day, maybe even today, you might come home to a Father in Heaven who loves you with an everlasting, unending, unwavering love.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrate the reality that Jesus Christ, didn't just die... but He rose! And in Him what is dead comes to life! Only in Him, can what is lost be found!

John 3:16-17

“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him **should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world **might be saved** through Him.**

- He didn't come to condemn what was lost, but He came to save the lost. His desire today is that every single one of us would be found.

Let's thank God this morning for new life, what was lost has been found!

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever lost something of real value? How did you feel when you found it? Can you relate that feeling to God's search for an individual person who is lost?
2. Do you identify more with the tax collector/sinner — or with the Pharisee? Does God differentiate between the two?
3. Why would a Pharisee be infuriated when Jesus says that heaven rejoices when one lost person is found?
4. Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus "knows" that angels rejoice over one sinner that repents — because Jesus had been in heaven and has experienced it Himself?
5. Discuss: "Self-righteousness will always cripple your self-awareness. Pride will always skew your perspective."

NOTES