

LOST & FOUND

Opening:

This is Memorial Day weekend

1. An American holiday,
2. Observed on the last Monday of May,
3. Honoring the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military



It's a day for remembering those we have lost

Have you ever lost something? ... Who hasn't?

Text: [Luke 15: 1-32](#) start with [Matthew 13](#)

Jesus teaches using three parables ...that are sometimes called the *lost parables*

Not because they were lost for years like the lost episodes of the Honey Mooners but ...

When you read a parable you look for a central meaning –

So what was Jesus' was after that day? ... To understand that we need to focus on the people he was speaking to

⇒ Especially one group that the text labels as, **people of questionable reputation**

⇒ **Many of you know about the rocky start to our getaway vacation-** Caught in traffic, we watched the minutes turn into hours hoping against hope that we would get to JFK in time to catch our flight but when the desk attendant said:

It's too late to board that flight – it's hard to explain the feeling of loss we experienced. We'll wait when is the next one? In two days!

It's not a pleasant feeling when you realize you can't find your:

- Your car keys or your wallet or cell phone (When it comes to cell phones people go into conniptions just because they forgot to take them with them)

But there are even worse you can lose:

- Your Confidence
- The trust of someone you love
- Your self worth

Today I pray we gain a better understanding of how God feels about lost or misplaced items.

In **Matthew 13** Jesus' disciples ask him, **Why do you teach in parables?** His answer is eye opening

11-15 He replied, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight. (MSG)

Jesus used parables as a bridge, connecting things people did understand with things they didn't.

Example: a shepherd's feelings toward his lost sheep - God's concern for lost people

A parable is like a joke ...it's designed to catch people off guard until the punch line at the end

Example: Italian Technology joke

Parables turn listeners into participants – They challenge our views and values.

These three parables are found in **Luke 15: 1-32** MSG

- Lost sheep
- Lost coin
- Lost son

Set the Context: **Luke 15: 1-3**

¹⁻³ By this time a **lot of men and women of doubtful reputation** were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends." Their grumbling triggered this story.

People of questionable reputation were not only gathering to listen to Jesus they were hanging out with him afterwards – eating meals with him

These people – for the first in a long time – maybe for the first time ever, were excited and hopeful

Jesus was offering something real and it included them

Not everyone listening felt that way ... some were curious – interested, even amazed at what they witnessed but not committed - they still didn't believe!

Others were there to maintain a sense of order to maintain the status quo – in their mind they were the people that determined who mattered to God and who didn't – The Pharisees

1. All of us want an explanation for why where here?
2. We long to make sense out of this life
3. No one wants to believe they're just an accident!
4. And Everyone wants to live a meaningful life - to leave a mark

They search for ways to make it happen

1. Meaningful career
2. Happy marriage a family – children
3. To do something noteworthy
4. To score big and make a lot of money

I never met a rich man who was happy but I have only very occasionally met a poor man who did not want to become a rich man.

Malcolm Muggeridge

People of doubtful reputations

Who labeled them that way? Our old pals the Pharisees – if you want to know what not to do, just check out the Pharisees

Their slam: It shameful and reprehensible - Jesus eats with sinners, treats them like old friends

Too many churches and religious organizations still see it that way!

Unwanted - undesirables need not attend here: addicts, gays, people with non conforming sexual life style, convicted felons the list goes on...

These types of sinners... need not apply here.

If you're honest some of the people on that list just gave you pause ... you know how I know?

Do we really want those kinds of people attending our church?

The Pharisees didn't - One of my greatest fears ...to wake up one day and realize I've become a Pharisee! A religious bigot who sees himself as better than those ... other people.

Personal: Summer job in Maspeth Queens Up every morning at 4:30am

A Christian worker I met there asked me a question - *Does God hear the prayers of sinners?*

We know that God does not listen to sinners John 9:31 Guess who quoted that statement out of context? The Pharisees I answered his question with a question.

If that's true, how did you get saved?

Jesus wanted the people who had come feeling condemned to understand how God really felt about them! So He used these parables

Luke 15: 4-7

Lost Sheep

⁴⁻⁷ "Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, 'Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!' Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.

Information about sheep:

- Sheep are a very social - they need to see other sheep.
- A sheep becomes highly agitated if it's separated from the flock.
- When one sheep moves, the rest follow
- In eastern Turkey, 400 sheep plunged to their death after one of the sheep tried to cross a 15-meter deep ravine, and the rest of the flock followed. (2006)

Luke 15: 8-10

Lost Coin

⁸⁻¹⁰ "Or imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and scour the house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it? And when she finds it you can be sure she'll call her friends and neighbors: 'Celebrate with me! I found my lost coin!' Count on it—that's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God."

What do these two stories have in common? Both had something lost – and later found – extreme rejoicing when what was lost is found!

But Jesus isn't really talking about sheep or coins – what is he talking about? Lost people and who rejoices when they're found? God and Heaven's armies

Lost Son Jesus gets down to it ...

¹¹⁻¹² Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.'

¹²⁻¹⁶ "So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

^{17, 20} "That brought him to his senses. ... He got right up and went home to his father.

²⁰⁻²¹ "When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

²²⁻²⁴ "But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time.

Jesus could have ended the story right here ... the men and women of "questionable reputation," those who were discovering Him for the first time - were encouraged because they had been found!

But the rest of the story is for people like you and me – the people already following Him

There are times in life when we lose ourselves...

- Indifference
- Life situations
- Unexpected tragedies
- Overwhelming heart break

Skyler's Mother's Day poem

We can feel lost at any stage of life:

1. Very young – or very old and everywhere in between ...
2. You can be just starting out - scared to death because you don't know which way to turn
3. Or facing the latter stages of your life, feeling lost wondering is this all that's left?
4. You can feel lost because your isolated and alone or standing in the middle of a crowd

The parable of the Lost Son –The prodigal... offers the wonderful but also frightening idea of FREE WILL

God loves us too much to force us to love Him back! – That's why religion never has never will work because God is not about rule keeping – He's about relationships

Jesus' parable of the Lost son – tells us that when the son was a long way offjust a blip on the horizon, The Father saw him

That means He was out there every day searching for His son. And He did not wait for the Prodigal to get to him he ran to meet and embrace his son.

Maybe you feel like one of those people that were labeled, **People of questionable reputation** ... or maybe you've walked with the Lord yet things are no longer the same

If you've never surrendered your life to Jesus and you feel that tug on your heart this morning don't waste another second – invite him into your heart right now!

If you're a believer but feeling lost this morning

[Listen to these words by Max Lucado ...](#)

Let's Pray