

Luke 15:1 – 32

¹ Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near him to listen to him. ² Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, 'This man receives sinners and eats with them.' ³ So he told them this parable, saying, ⁴ 'What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?' ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ 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 which was lost!' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way, 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, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and 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 which I had lost!' ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

¹¹ And he said, 'A man had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. ¹³ And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. ¹⁴ Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. ¹⁷ But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.' ²⁰ So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; ²³ and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate. ²⁵ Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. ²⁷ And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' ²⁸ But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. ²⁹ But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; ³⁰ but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' ³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

Questions

1. (Before reading the passage) Describe a time when you lost something. What was it? How did it feel? And did you ever find it?
2. Leader: Tell a personal story of finding an object you thought was lost. Then tell a personal story about getting back a relationship you thought was lost.
 - a. Object: e.g. car keys
 - b. Relationship
3. Now read through the three parables of lost things in Luke 15. What stands out to you?
4. Cultural points:
 - a. Lost sheep: sheep are dumb animals, yet carefully valued by Middle Eastern shepherds. This was a reasonable thing to do
 - b. Lost coin: The one silver coin was part of the set of ten silver coins, as a necklace. It was a dowry gift given by her father to her when she got married. Losing one coin is more than losing just 1/10th of the value.
 - c. Lost son: We'll look into this section next time.
 - d. Celebration is with the community: he calls together his friends and his neighbors (v.6), she calls together her friends and neighbors (v.9), and the father involves the servants and presumably the rest of the family and the community as well.
5. Our emotional dynamics
 - a. Notice that for us as humans, we tend to de-value the thing we lose. Or shift to replace it right away. If Dad left the family, we devalue Dad. If we lose a friend, we devalue that person. If we lose an object, we typically buy another one. Yet if we de-value the object or person we lose, we undercut our own ability to feel joy when we find it.
6. God's emotional dynamics
 - a. Somehow, God doesn't de-value any single person He loses. He maintains a fierce search for that person. Just as the shepherd searches until he finds the lost sheep, the woman searches until she finds the lost coin, and the father searches the horizon to see if the lost son comes back, God always searches.
 - b. God longs for us. He values us immensely.
 - c. What is Jesus saying about his own heart and emotions in this moment?
 - d. God wants others to share in His joy that He has found something or someone who was lost. What helps us connect with God in His joy?