

2007 Sept 16 Luke 15:1-10 **Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

Lost and found

Most of us can relate to the gospel for today. Today we look at the 3 parables about lost things. We have all lost things from the youngest of us to the oldest of us. The people who put together the lectionary, the people who put together the readings for the week, they even lost something. They lost a parable. That's right. We read about Jesus' parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin and the next parable is the lost son but they must have lost it cause they didn't put it in.

One thing we can all relate to is the feeling you get when you find something you have lost. We lose all kinds of things pens, money, socks, boyfriends, girl friends, hair. How about losing your child in a department store? We lose all kinds of things. Usually if you are upset about losing something someone helps you by asking, "Well where was the last place you remember having it"? If I remembered that I would be able to find the thing that I lost.

But when you do find the thing you've lost, and it doesn't have to be anything big or expensive, finding it can make you feel great.

This one man named Darrel told me how finding his pen was pretty much a conversion experience for him. His father had given him a pen. I don't even know if it had any value besides sentimental value. While a student at the University of Wisconsin Madison he lost his pen. He was so upset. He was so upset that he prayed and asked God to help him find the pen. Then he went out looking for it and he found it. And he rejoiced and said he would never doubt God again.

One of the things Jesus was trying to get the Pharisees and Scribes to understand was how it feels to find something you have lost.

First Jesus tells that familiar story about this man with 100 sheep. He loses one. He leaves the 99 other sheep to go and find it. That sounds strange but maybe he wasn't even thinking about the others out of his worry for his lost one. He finds the lost sheep. He calls his friends and neighbors and says rejoice with me. I found my sheep that was lost.

Then Jesus tells about the woman who has 10 silver coins and loses one. She searches all over until she finds it. When she finds it she rejoices. She calls her friends and neighbors and says rejoice with me. I found my coin that was lost.

The third parable Jesus tells, the parable that the lectionary people lost, its perhaps the most familiar of the lost parables, the prodical son also known as the lost son. When the lost son is found there is rejoicing. The father calls his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him.

Now there is a key element in this rejoicing. That element is the relationship between that which is lost and the one who lost it. For example if a girl loses her boyfriend it might be a bad thing, it could be a good thing. She might have been trying to lose him. And then if he is found that wouldn't be a good thing.

So the relationship is a very important ingredient.

My brothers and I play this game. First of all you have to understand that my Father, my brothers and I, all think we are funny. We are a bunch of frustrated comedians. The difference between us is they try to be funny and I am funny.

Well my brother Scott and I play this game, one says I'm adopted, the other says, no I'm adopted. We will argue about this, joking around, neither one of us wants to admit our relationship to the rest of the family. Each one of us claiming to be part of a better gene pool.

Of course adopted children can claim to be in better standing with the family because the mother and father chose to make them a part of the family. Unfortunately for me I look too much like my father to be able to deny my lineage much less my relationship with the family.

I have really never doubted my place in the family but there is one event that I will always remember that affirmed that fact. After college I worked for an investment firm. I sold some investments to my Dad's credit union. One of the officers of the Credit union said something to my Dad insinuating that I charged too much and hadn't treated them fairly. As soon as he said it, my Dad hauled off and belted the guy. He hit him with an open hand but he knocked him down.

I was shocked. As far as I knew my Dad never hit anyone since he was a kid. Well except for me. I asked him about it and he said he wasn't going to let somebody say something like that about his son. Our relationship made all the difference.

Relationships make all the difference. While Moses was up on the mountain getting the Ten Commandments he was gone a long time. The people started doing some really bad things in his absence. God told Moses go down at once. YOUR people who YOU brought out from the land of Egypt are being really bad. I'm going to wipe them out and start over with you and your kids.

Moses talks him out of wiping them out by reminding God: these are YOUR people who YOU brought out of the land of Egypt. You made a promise to them to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob.

You see what he did? God and Moses are doing what parents often do when a child is bad. YOUR child. No, YOUR Child.

God is persuaded to repent from wiping them out because he is reminded that these are HIS people. In the lost son parable the Father and the brother of the lost son play a similar game. The brother of the lost son is angry that the Father is welcoming his good for nothing brother back. I'm paraphrasing again. The brother says: This son of YOURS who wasted all of your money comes back and you throw a party for him and you've never done anything for me.

The father replies, We had to celebrate because this brother of YOURS was dead and now is alive.

The father celebrates because HIS son is found. We don't know what the brother will do.

The woman finds HER coins and celebrates. We don't know what her friends and neighbors will do.

The man finds HIS sheep and celebrates we don't know what his friends and neighbors will do.

Jesus and all of heaven celebrate when the lost are found. We don't know what will the Pharisees and scribes will do?

What will you do?

What will you do when the lost are found?

Will you be like the Pharisees and the Scribes? They are good faithful people. But they snub their noses at those who struggle in their faith and get lost from time to time.

What will you do when the lost are found?

Will you be like the brother who sees himself as the one who does all the work and makes all the sacrifices? But he gets really mad when his good for nothing brother who has really screwed up comes back and is welcomed back as if he had always been faithful and hardworking and put the family first. Actually he's treated even better.

What will you do when the lost are found?

Will you be ready to welcome and celebrate the lost when they show up here at Urland? Or when you meet them in town?

Are we ready to treat them like Jesus would treat them even though they don't deserve it? You know why Jesus would treat them well and rejoice that they are here? Because they are his people who have been found. Wouldn't it be great if we could help Jesus find some of his people that are lost?

That kind of fits into our mission statement doesn't it. To know Jesus and make him known.

God bless you this week. Amen? ---