

# **Lost and Found**

**A sermon by Rev. Dr. Gregory Young  
Presented on Sunday, September 12, 2010**

## **Sermon Prayer:**

Please pray with me. Gracious God, your word is a light unto our feet. Your word guides our lives. We are grateful for those in our congregation who right at this time are with our children and youth and pray that you will use their gifts and their talents to teach our young people and to learn from our young people. And especially we do pray for our children and youth that as your word has gathered us here as a congregation that what they do during this time will serve to bring you honor and glory as we seek to do the same in our time of worship together, through Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Amen.

## **Sermon:**

Many years ago – and I want to say it’s probably 20-25 years ago – I was serving a church where the church secretary was always losing her keys. It just seemed to be a daily part of our routine that at some point during the morning or the afternoon, the two of us would be searching all over the church building - and it was quite a large church facility - searching for her keys. She would leave them in the kitchen of the church. She would – I think one time we found them behind the cross on the altar in the church – we couldn’t figure out how they got there. She would leave them where the bulletins were left after Sunday morning worship, on a Monday morning she’d set them down to pick up the bulletins and walk away. We found them in all kinds of places and apparently my dear friend had this same problem at home.

And so one Christmas, her husband found the perfect Christmas gift for her. He found a key fob with a key ring on it that if she put her keys on this key ring and if she lost her keys all she would have to do would be to whistle,

and the key fob would start beeping until she found it and turned it off. It was the best Christmas gift she'd ever gotten I think. She was so thrilled. And so we changed from going through this big search every day at church to now whistling. [Whistles.] And that became tedious after awhile until the day came when – God bless her – Dori started whistling and there was no response from the keys. And if you had visited our church that day you would've thought the two of us had totally lost our sanity because we were walking around the church building whistling in every corner until we finally found it.

You know we all lose things. You know what it feels like to lose something; something as precious as a loved one or something as needed as a set of keys. You know how when you realize you have lost something it possesses you. There are some things that I lose that I go absolutely bananas about. I can't think of anything else – all I can think of is the thing that I've lost and I'm going to go crazy until I find it. And usually what happens is if I'm around family, they wind up trying to help me find what is lost and they usually find it just to shut me up because I go that crazy when I can't find it. That's true, right Cindy? I know you just leaned over...Yeah! I know. You find them. That's true. In fact I have learned over the years if I can't find something ask Cindy – she'll find it so I don't have to freak out so much. But we've all lost something and we know what it feels like to lose something.

And our parables today, these two parables about the lost sheep and the lost coin, I really wish they were named the found sheep and the found coin; that's probably how I would've named these parables if I were in charge. But you know it really is about being lost and being found. And they're two little windows for us into our relationship with God. Now in this age of big business and with our military campaigns we hear talk of acceptable losses. And any smart business person would look at this shepherd with 99 sheep who's lost one of them and say, "Get on with it. That's an acceptable loss. That's 1%; that's nothing in the grand scheme

of things. Get on with shepherding! What do you mean you have to go find this one lost sheep?"

But apparently there was more at stake for this shepherd than what business sense would say is an acceptable loss. First off, I want to know - how did he know one of those sheep was missing? You've got 100 of them there. Sheep do not stand still very long, how do you count them so you know one of them is missing? He knew these sheep better than we know ourselves. He knew when he looked out on the flock one was gone and it possessed him. It drove him to make sure that the 99 were secure and then to retrace his steps. You know how it is when you lose something. You try to – ok, what was I doing; when did I last have this and what did I do between then and now? And you try to retrace your steps. And you can see the shepherd looking in the rocks and looking out in the fields and with disappointment and with anxiousness each step of the way until he finally finds that one lost sheep.

The lamb probably didn't even know it was lost. It probably was grazing on some grass and just sort of enjoying the quiet because the 99 weren't around bleating and baying. Or maybe this one sheep had sort of gone astray and gotten into a perilous situation where it was stuck in some rocks and trying to get free and maybe it was an anxious moment for this little lamb. We really don't know where the shepherd found the lost sheep. All we know is the shepherd searched until he found the lost sheep.

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The woman tore the whole house apart until she found that one coin that was there to feed her family. That was there to provide for the care of those entrusted to her. She tore the whole place apart until she found it and when that coin was found and when that lamb was found there was great rejoicing for the woman and for the shepherd. In fact, you can almost envision them throwing a party for their friends saying, "Come and rejoice with me because I found what was lost."

And this is how God's Kingdom is. God loves the 99 that are safe and secure and steady in their faith. And God searches diligently until God finds the

one that is lost. Are you in the 99? Or are you the one? Have you ever been lost? Usually when we're lost we feel all alone. If I'm with someone else and the two of us are lost or if I'm in a group and the group is lost well at least I'm with somebody. And we can be lost together and there's some comfort in that but when you're lost, when you feel lost you usually feel all alone.

Have you lost a job recently? Are you a freshman in college getting used to a whole new way of living on your own? Are you in a marriage that is a real struggle for you, or in an abusive relationship? Have your friends all turned their back on you? Did you say something that offended someone else and broke a relationship? Are you lost? The good news of these parables for us who journey together in life's way is that that feeling of aloneness when you feel lost doesn't have to be because God is searching and will find you and you will not be alone. In fact if you are sitting here today feeling lost and all alone, look around you because you have friends who feel lost and all alone.

The whole purpose of the 99 is to bring the lost back to the group so the group can be together and here we are. However you are feeling lost this day, whatever it is in your life that's making you feel so isolated that no one will understand and no one will care, know this – God understands; God cares. And God cares enough that God placed something on your heart and in your soul today that brought you here; that found you where you were and brought you to the 99. And so this is a time of rejoicing. When we come to worship and praise God we come to rejoice the blessing of God's holy word that has called us together and creates of us a community of 99. And we thank God for that. We praise God's holy name and so I stand here today to say to each of you - if you get to the end of this service today and you still feel lost, find me; come to me; let me be with you; let me share with you; let me pray with you. Or reach out to someone who is sitting next to you if you are brave and bold enough to do so because you know what? We're in it together. And praise God; God has gathered us – the lost and the lonely of this world

together into a fellowship that we might support and care for one another; and that we might also join God in the diligent search to find the lost and the lonely of this world.

Rejoice! Praise God's holy name and know; know that you are not alone. That indeed God walks with you and God's family walks with you.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

I just saw the note I wrote to myself and by the way, there are no acceptable losses in the Kingdom of God. Each one is important to God and that means each one is important to us.