

# Lost and Found

## Luke 15:1-10

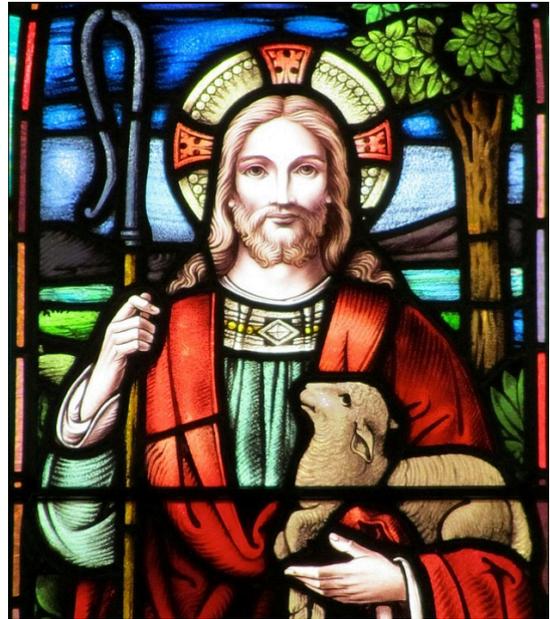
The parable of the Lost Sheep is such a well-known parable that you may ask, "What is the point of preaching on it to people who are not lost?"

My initial answer is that the parable is not about being lost but about being found. Secondly, though we as adults know Jesus our good shepherd and his teachings well, in our sinful hearts we continuously fall away or wander away from him. Sometimes it is because of selfish desires, doubts, or uncaring attitudes that we are in danger of being lost. At other times, outside influences lead us away from the company of believers.

We should be, and are, rightly concerned for those who absent themselves for long periods of time from the word of God, and from fellowship and worship. They risk becoming lost, or their faith being harmed by predators. Still, not one of us should think that we couldn't be led astray simply because we are regular church attenders.

We are all tempted. We all lose sight of Jesus from time to time in the fog of everyday temptations and trials. It is by grace that the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and reminds us that we have a loving Shepherd who desires that we turn to him and call upon him for help.

Isn't it good to know that God doesn't give up on us when we wander? His Word and Holy Spirit goes out into the world to seek and find the lost. God sends ministers of the Gospel, sometimes a pastor, but more often a friend, to guide and even carry us home.



The image is often of the young lamb being found and carried home, but rams and ewes of every age are in need of being found. Looking at this picture, are you reminded of a time when you went astray but were brought back? Perhaps you've shared that story as a cautionary tale, or have told it to encourage parents or our congregation to not give up on searching and reaching out for the lost.

Others of you are able to share a testimony of your first being found; and of repenting and being enfolded by God's grace and forgiveness. There is great joy in being welcomed and embraced by a new family and loving community, which rejoices over you without reminding you of your shame, but celebrates God's goodness.

We are told that the company of heaven rejoices more over one sinner who repents than over the holy living of nine righteous people who have not wandered away.

We were all once outside God's kingdom. That's not to say we were unloved or not sought or prayed for, but at some point, by the action of God, we were brought into his glorious light, baptised and made new with the seal of his promise, and rejoiced over.

What other gems can we glean and rediscover anew from this well-known parable, and the one that follows? One thing is the effort and heart of the one who seeks out the lost.

No effort is spared by the shepherd who goes out with a love and a passion for the lost. Even earthly shepherds will leave ninety-nine sheep in the care of each other, hoping for fine weather and the absence of predators, as they go to search for the lost.

The work of Jesus is with his people, but he is surely found in welcoming sinners into his presence, and eating and drinking with them. None of us would be here if it wasn't so. Though we are present, we might also be lost from Him at times.

The second parable — that of the Lost coin lost within a house and the effort its owner makes to find it — teaches us of God's searching for the lost within the household of faith.



A woman has lost a coin. It's most likely a significant coin or piece of silver from her dowry. Women not only kept such silver coins as a memento of their wedding day and the love of family, but also as a personal piece of insurance against hard times.

The coin is lost, so the woman lights a lamp. Not because it is night time, but because her home would have had next to no windows, and when you search for something small you need extra light. Just as you and I would put on our glasses and get a torch to check out likely spots, such as under the fridge or at the back of the couch.

That seems obvious and practical when searching for a small object, but in the light of Jesus telling this parable now recorded in scripture, the more obvious message for us is that the lost are found by the light of God's word. If someone is lost from the kingdom in our own household, the light of God's word is what is needed to find and restore them.



The woman not only lights a lamp, but she also puts in plenty of heart and effort in searching and sweeping.

The coin she is looking for is not only valuable, but it is personally valuable to her. We put heart and effort into seeking the lost; but our greatest hope is in God's love for them. The first step in finding the lost is to light the candle of hope and truth of God's love for all people, no matter how dirty or distant they've become.



We challenge lostness in our midst because we care for each other and about each other's eternal future.

We know God seeks the lost person's welfare, even more so than we do. Whether from being lost in wrong attitude, judgement of others, be it being lost and overwhelmed by despair, grief, or shame; as God's representatives and instruments, we seek the sinner out of love. Like Jesus, we risk our reputations as we seek the lost with genuine love in the wilderness and darkness, even sharing their hurts and rejection.

God goes out and seeks to reconcile the world to himself out of love — out of love, he sent his Son, and out of love he sends us. Love calls the lost to safety. Love is prepared to take risks and enter the places and lives of broken people to guide them home, to lift them up, to help them discover a better way of living in knowing the love of God.

It is out of love and not judgment, that we seek and sweep; that we work and pray. We shine the full light of God's word, both law and gospel, in examining our own lives and shining a light in order to save. We rejoice when people's eyes are opened to God's love, when attitudes change, hope is restored, sin is confessed and repented. It is God who embraces and restores, and we rejoice in the company of angels and arch-angels.



Privileged to witness and partake in God's gracious work of seeking and restoring the lost, we offer ourselves as helpers, as servants of God who light lamps, who speak comfort and peace, wisdom and truth. The church that prays and seeks, out of love.

Loving Shepherds and Lamp Lighting Sweepers  
may the light of God's word  
shining in the church be our  
anchor, our lighthouse and  
path by which Jesus the  
Good Shepherd calls, leads  
and carries us home. Amen.

How blest we are to have brave and faithful friends willing to seek us out, not as accusers but as loving shepherds, and as lamp-lighting sweepers, searching with the Saviours love. Whether our lostness is a wandering away physically from the community of God, or of being lost in the pews whilst being still present in the congregation — may the light of God's Word be our anchor, our lighthouse, our path by which the Good Shepherd calls, leads, and carries us home.

Amen.

Video of the service including the above address: <https://youtu.be/kIYxqCi5zy4>