

*Lost and Found*

Luke 15:1-7

September 14, 15, 2019

Beargrass Christian Church**I. INTRODUCTION.**

- A. Video—Family in Bahamas: <https://youtu.be/aMNaBuKt8kY>.
- B. Have you ever lost something that was valuable?
  - 1. Have you ever found anything that was valuable?
  - 2. Do you remember how you felt?
- C. As we begin to consider these parables, the timing is interesting.
  - 1. Think about the countless losses because of the recent hurricane.
  - 2. On September 11 we recalled the devastating losses in 2001.
  - 3. Not all of our stories have happy endings—like the one in the video with a reunite family.
  - 4. So how do we welcome the wisdom to celebrate our “finds”—and the strength and courage to find our way through our losses?
- D. It is still the season of Pentecost.
  - 1. So, we are still celebrating God’s gift of the Spirit to the Church.
  - 2. We have wrapped up the “Living it UP” series.
  - 3. Today we start up a new one called “Lost and Found.”
  - 4. We will focus on passages from Luke 15-17 and continue to think about what a Spirit-filled, Spirit-led life looks like.
- E. Our text is the first of three “lost-and-found” stories in Luke 15.
  - 1. Luke links them together, skillfully building in intensity and power the force of the remarkable messages they convey.
  - 2. We can also identify “layers” of meaning in the stories.
  - 3. In other words, they speak to us on different levels.

**II. THE BIBLE IS FULL OF SHEEP/SHEPHERD IMAGERY.**

- A. Today’s lesson from Luke is one of the better-known references.
  - 1. Jesus asks: “Which one of you, having 100 sheep and losing one, does not leave the 99 in the wilderness and go after it?”
  - 2. “When you have found it, you have a party and say: ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’”
- B. How beautiful...how touching...and how ridiculous.
  - 1. We have made this point before—but it is important.
  - 2. An old hymn goes something like this: “There were ninety and nine who safely lay in the shelter of the fold....”
  - 3. But that is not how Jesus tells this parable.
  - 4. He left them where...in the wilderness?!
  - 5. This adds an edge to the story that needs our attention.
  - 6. A hundred sheep is a good-sized flock—surely the shepherd would not miss just one woolly mammal—but he does!
  - 7. Why risk the well-being of all of the others?
  - 8. It is just one lamb on the lam—just let it go.
- C. Sheep aren’t as dumb as once thought—but they still get lost.
  - 1. Some get lost by nibbling at grass and never looking up.
  - 2. That sounds silly—but we may exhibit similar behavior.
  - 3. Have you ever been “nibbling along” one day, preoccupied, thinking about all kinds of stuff—and all of a sudden you looked up and thought, “How did I get here?”
  - 4. I have heard some adults confess to having that problem.

5. The same thing happens to younger people with cell phones—they text away, look up, and think, “How did I get here?”

D. And sheep are born followers—they will follow you anywhere.

1. A woman tells a story about her pet lamb, Beatrice.
2. One day, Beatrice broke out of her pen and led the neighbor’s sheep out of their field and toward a busy highway intersection.
3. She called for the sheep, but they kept trotting toward the road.
4. In desperation and at the top of her lungs, she yelled, “Baaaa!”
5. Beatrice stopped in her tracks, made a “ewe” turn, and came back to her own field, with all the neighbor’s sheep trailing meekly behind her.

E. A new teacher from Dallas took a position in a rural Texas town.

1. She asked her first-graders: “If there are 12 sheep in a field and one jumps over the fence, how many would be left?”
2. One little fellow raised his hand and said, “None.”
3. The teacher said, “I’m not sure you know arithmetic.”
4. He said: “No, ma’am. But I do know sheep.”

### III. WE, LIKE SHEEP, GO ASTRAY—WE GET LOST.

A. Is it possible that people do more dumb things than sheep?

1. No sheep has ever been charged with abusing its own lamb.
2. No sheep has ever been charged with stealing or murder.
3. I have never seen a sheep armed with an assault rifle.
4. I guess if we did see one we would have to call it “Ram-bo?!”
5. But we never will.
6. I don’t know any that are hooked on heroine, opioids or vaping out in the pasture.
7. Sheep don’t hate other sheep who are of a different color, economic level, sexual orientation, or religious background.
8. Sheep only have a few ways they can become lost.
9. Humans have hundreds—and we find new ways every day.

B. I suspect that we all feel lost from time to time.

1. Some of us have hurts that were inflicted on us early in our lives, and those hurts still cause us pain and problems.
2. We may lash out at others or act self-destructively.
3. We may not even know why we do the things we do.
4. That is why we need a shepherd, a God of lost sheep.
5. We need a God who comes to us and finds us where we are.

### IV. AND WE ARE ALSO IN THE “FINDING” BUSINESS.

A. Rob became a “good shepherd” when he sent an email to the parents, grandparents and caregivers of our youth last Wednesday.

1. He wrote: “Today is the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.
2. “We remember that day—but our children do not—and we would be remiss to not engage this topic with our kids.
3. “They have no context for how the world changed on that day.
4. “They have never known a time when you could walk someone all the way to their departure gate in an airport.
5. “Iraq and Afghanistan have always been war zones to them.
6. “And this is a tough one for me—they have never known a time when our country wasn’t actively fighting a war.
7. “So, talk with them about what you remember before the attacks and what you were doing and thinking when they occurred.

8. “Share your hopes for peace and listen to theirs—pray for first responders, troops, victims, and the world at large.
9. “May we all someday learn to live together in peace.”

B. That day rocked our world, but also helped us rise up and respond.

1. Someone said: “Every human being has a basic instinct.
2. “We are hard-wired to help each other out.
3. “If a hiker gets lost in the mountains, people will search.
4. “If an accident happens, people will line up to give blood.
5. “If an earthquake or hurricane or tornado levels a city, people all over the world will send emergency supplies and assistance.
6. “This is so fundamentally human that it’s found in every culture.
7. “Yes, there are some who just don’t care, but they are massively outnumbered by the people who do and who find ways to help.”

V. **AND WE ARE BETTER WHEN WE ARE IN IT TOGETHER.**

A. One of the “layers” of meaning in the story is about community.

1. In the parable, the flock is not complete with one missing.
2. The shepherd can be viewed as a stand-in for Jesus.
3. And what does he do when the sheep wanders off?
4. He tracks it down and brings it back to the flock.
5. While finding it benefits the shepherd, it is more beneficial for the sheep, which likely would’ve become a mutton-chop dinner.

B. The lost sheep represents people, so there are human applications.

1. Yet the only one Jesus makes is that the return of the sheep to the flock qualifies as “repentance”—and maybe that’s the point?
2. Perhaps the main reason for being a part of the faith community is because it is where God wants us to be?
3. Yes, shepherds do go out after strays—but most of the work shepherds do with sheep is while they are with the flock.
4. Flocks are nourishing locations where God can work with us.
5. They are places where we can work with each other—sometimes we will be sheep—sometimes we’ll be shepherds.
6. But if we lose our way, Jesus will likely lead us back to the community, toward a place of safety, sustenance and nurture.
7. And when we get there, there will be joy in heaven!

C. Dr. Fred Craddock was one of my beloved preachers and teachers.

1. I remain grateful for his perspectives about these parables.
2. He said: “All three parables in Luke 15 are commonly identified by their negative—rather than their positive attributes.
3. “We call them the *lost* sheep, not the found sheep; the lost coin, not the found coin; and the *prodigal* son, not the loving father.
4. “But all three of them end in celebrations of joy!”
5. “We devote an inordinate amount of time on the conditions addressed by the gospel—rather than on the gospel itself.
6. “It is true that a dark-velvet background helps bring out the beauty of the diamond cast against it.
7. “But it seems that too many preachers and people enjoy the dark background—more than the beauty of the diamond itself.
8. “These parables are about love and forgiveness and joy.”

D. I don’t think any of you have a sheep for a pet—but many of you do have a dog—so you might be able to identify with this video...

E. Dog reunited with family: <https://youtu.be/UBP4CwppO4M>.

- F. Friends, if we can get that excited about a reunion with a dog...
  - 1. Or that excited about a reunion with a ewe...
  - 2. How much more...how much more...for a child of God?