

Transcript - 20250907

Luke chapter 15 is one of my favorite passages in all of Scripture, one of my favorite passages

to teach from, to preach from.

There are so many different ways and avenues to approach that particular passage.

But one of the things that just kept coming to my thoughts as the week kind of progressed was God is always there.

And as you look at the different stories, and we're going to look at these stories together,

one of the things that is just so powerful that in every one of these stories,

the representative of God in the story, that God, no matter what's going on,

no matter what challenge was presented, no matter the difficulty that was there, God was always there.

And so I just wanted to kind of take the time then, since it just seemed to be a thought that I couldn't shake,

was just to spend time together with it this morning and kind of break it down and look at it from Scripture together.

So we'll start in Luke chapter 1, and we'll read this first section together.

Luke chapter 1, starting in verse 1.

Now the tactics were all gathered around to hear Jesus, but the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered,

this man welcomes sinners and eats with them. Then Jesus told them this parable. Suppose one of you

had a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the 99 in the open country and go after

the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts elders and goes home.

Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, rejoice with me. I have found my lost

sheep, I tell you that in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who

repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent. One of the first, maybe

most well-known parables, parable of the lost sheep, really all of these parables are so well

known from the story of Jesus and from his teachings. But this idea of lost sheep, something

being lost. I had this great idea in, I don't know, mom, middle school, high school. The 4-H guy came

through in middle school or eighth grade, ninth grade, somewhere around in there and said, hey,

there's this project that you can be a part of. We'll bring you a sheep to your house, a little lamb for free. And for the next six months, you're going to raise it. And I thought, well, that ought

to be fun. So I signed up for that. I don't know if I really asked for permission for that, but I up for that. And they brought that sheep to my house one day and unloaded it. And we really

didn't have anywhere good to really, we had an old dog kennel that the people before us had built,

a nice dog kennel. And we kind of kept this sheep in there and I had to get it out every day and

train it. I was supposed to show it at the fair and then sell it. And then I kind of had that bleeding heart moment that I realized that selling it meant that they were going to kill it and

someone's going to eat it. And at that time, I really, that kind of made me uncomfortable nowadays. I'd be like, you know, low and slow at 225 for about five hours. And, you know, that thing's going to be some fine eating right, Randy, like that. I'd have had everybody over.

We'd have had a cookout. But, you know, I was like, man, I just don't know if I can do that. But

I learned something very valuable spiritually from that kind of experiment in my life.

And that is sheep are not really bright. As a matter of fact, sheep are kind of dumb.

And when Jesus goes, you are my sheep, that's not necessarily a compliment to us.

Because sheep need a what?

Sheep need a shepherd.

I tried, and I was not a good shepherd.

That sheep didn't do anything I told it to.

And that 4-H guy would come around and be like, well, here, you do it this way and this way.

And it'd do exactly what that guy wanted him to do.

But as far as, like, being a sheep shepherd, that was not my calling in life.

I learned real quick farming was not going to be how I made my money down the road or raising animals or anything like that.

but I learned that sheep are not really that bright.

So when Jesus goes, hey, you're my sheep,

my sheep know my voice, they come to me.

He's not really complimenting us.

He's saying, hey, you have a tendency

of getting yourself in trouble

and not knowing how to get yourself out of trouble.

You have a tendency of messing your life up on your own

and really getting yourself into some situations

that you don't know how to get yourself out of.

And as we look in Luke chapter 15

in the parable of the lost sheep,

we kind of see that kind of issue kind of taking place. And I think we've all been in that moment

in our life. We've all been that lost sheep. And I'm not just necessarily talking spiritually lost,

even though I think we've all been there too, right? At some point in our life, we've not been

a Christian, we've not been saved, and then we have become saved. But I've been thinking about this

this week from the aspect of just challenges in life. We've all been going along in life, and things have been rocking and rolling.

Things have been great.

We're with the group.

You know, that's kind of what you got to get the picture

that this guy had a hundred sheep, right?

And everything was going great for all hundred.

And then he kind of gets somewhere and he looks around

and he's counting his sheep and he's missing one.

And this one sheep is out here.

And for one moment, everything was great.

Everything was going wonderful.

Everything was just, I mean, he was just like everybody else.

And then he looked up and everybody's gone.

and he's lost and he's all by himself and it's kind of like life had just kind of smacked him

in the face and he doesn't know where to go he doesn't know where to turn he doesn't really maybe

even know what's happened you know sheep have this tendency of when they eat they look straight down

at the ground and they eat until they run out of grass to eat and so if they come to an edge of a

cliff or edge of a hill and the grass runs out, guess what they do? They just walk off the

edge

of the cliff. Like I said, sheep aren't real brout. They don't look up and check. And do we ever do

that? Do we ever get so focused on what we're doing in life or so focused on one thing that we zoom in

on that and we just get lost? We get lost in it. And we look up and we've messed up. We look up

and we're totally off center from where we need to be with Jesus.

And I see in this story that those moments in our life happen.

But when we think about this idea that God is there,

that no matter what's going on in our life, God is there.

We see this shepherd.

Jesus himself says, I'm the good shepherd.

We see this shepherd.

He looks around and he says, hey, all these other people,

all these other sheep that I'm taking care of, they're okay right now.

They're okay right now.

And he takes off, and it doesn't say how far he went.

It doesn't say what he had to do.

But he goes off, and he finds this one sheep that he was responsible for,

this one sheep that was in trouble, this one sheep that was lost all by himself,

that his world was up and down, that his world was lost and confused.

And he says, I'm going to go make sure this one sheep is okay.

And to me, that message to us this morning is you may be here, right?

But you can be here this morning and still feel lost.

You can be here in this room this morning and still feel alone.

You can be in this room this morning and still feel like your world is totally upside down.

But I want you to know something.

That when life hits you out of nowhere, when your world is upside down,

Jesus is already on his way to come find you.

Because Jesus is always there.

Say that with me.

Jesus is always there.

Say it with me out loud.

Jesus is always there.

No matter what's going on,

no matter how messed up your life might be this morning,

no matter how challenging it might be,

Jesus is on his way to find you and will find you

and will bring you back to where you need to be.

To me, that's the first thing of this story

that I see this morning.

The next story kind of hit me.

I guess because of a conversation I had with one of our church members earlier in the week,

and I'll kind of tell you about it after we read it.

Verse 8, it says,

Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one.

Does she light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says,

Rejoice with me, I have found my lost coin.

In the same way I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of God over one sinner who repents.

Earlier this week, I had a conversation with one of our church members about a conversation they had with a good friend

who was kind of talking about getting back into church.

And they were really kind of struggling with that decision because they knew that they know where they need to be,

but their kind of idea with where they are in life is everything's okay. You know, some things feel

kind of off a little bit, but nothing real major, but it's just kind of like they know they need to

be somewhere. They know they need to be in church, but they don't really think it's going to change

their life just a whole, whole lot at the moment per se, but they know that they need to be there.

And I think about that in relation to this coin. This coin doesn't really have any idea that it's

lost, does it? The only person that knows that this coin is lost in this story is the owner of the

coin. The coin's just hanging out, just doing its thing, just being there. And its life as a coin

is really not affected one way or another. And I think sometimes we can be that way. We can just

kind of be living life, thinking everything's great, thinking everything's grand. Maybe something's

off a little bit, but we really don't realize that we're lost. We really don't realize that

we're disconnected. We really don't realize that we're missing the benefits of being part of the

family, that we're really not living our fullness of what God has called us to.

How much is a lost \$100 bill worth? It's still worth what? \$100. How useful is a lost \$100 bill?

it's not useful at all is it Brian because it's what because it's lost

you know in our lives we can be just kind of rolling along and not really be doing what we

need to do we can be lost we can be disconnected thinking everything's okay but if we're disconnected

from God if we're disconnected from friendships if we're disconnected from relationships if we're

lost in that way we can be here and really not be living the fullness that God has called us to

But even in that moment, even when we're lost in that way or disconnected in that way, who is still looking for us? In this story, the representative of God in this story, the woman who this coin belongs to, what does she begin to do in her house? She begins to just tear her house

up, turn her house upside down. She lights a lamp and starts tearing her house up until she finds

that coin. And I love that image of Jesus, that even when we don't realize that we need Jesus,

even when we don't realize that there's even somebody that needs to come looking for us,

Jesus is what? Jesus is there. Jesus is looking for us. God is longing for us. God is opening up

doors. God is turning things upside down in our life. Maybe that feeling of things are just a little bit off is God going, I'm trying to get your attention so that you know I'm looking for you.

And so God is looking for us even in those moments that we may think everything's okay.

Then the big story, then the big story, and this story kind of, I've thought about it in a couple

of different ways this week. The first comes from the younger son. We pick up in verse 11. There was

a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate.

So he divided his property between them. Not long after that, the younger son got together all he

had, set off for a distant country, and there squandered his wealth and wild living. After

he

had spent everything, there was a severe famine in the whole country, and he began to be in need.

So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him out to his fields to

feed pigs. He longed to be filled, I'm sorry, he longed to fill his stomach with the pods

that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to his senses, he said,

how many of my father's hired servants have food to spare? And here I am starving to death.

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him,

Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.

So make me like one of your hired servants.

So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off,

his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him.

And he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servant, quick, bring the

best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fatted

calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate for this son of mine was dead and is alive again.

He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. All right, so you can, you know,

from the beginning of this story and something that I've learned with my kids, there was a man

who had two sons. Even if you just have two kids, those kids are always going to be what?

Different. It's no, you know, surprise that one kid is like, hey, give me what's mine. I'm going

to go live my life over here. And one kid's like, dad, I'll stay home and take care of you, right?

There's always going to be that one kid that stays home and takes care of mom and dad.

And then there's always going to be that one kid that goes, I'm going to make a mess out of

everything. And so this story starts out as the kid that makes a mess out of everything. And he

goes and he just makes a mess out of everything. That's an interesting image of God. God wants us,

right? God wants us to be in his family. God wants us to love him. He loves us. He wants us to have

this great relationship. But as we've kind of talked about before, Christianity is a voluntary thing. God also says this, if you don't want to be here, you don't what? You don't have to be.

And I think one of the hardest things that God does in the love that he has for us is he walks

with us sometimes to the end of the road, and he gives us a hug, and he says,

if you ever want to come home, I'll be right here. And he lets us leave.

Imagine how hard that was for the father in this story.

Imagine how hard that is for God when we decide to walk away.

And the son goes out, and he lives his life, and he squanders everything,

and he finds himself in the worst of worst of situations.

This is a Jewish guy.

It's a Jewish audience listening, and it says that he finds himself feeding what?

Pigs, hogs, and that is the unclean of unclean animals,

and he's feeding them the things that make them unclean and looking at it and going,

I wish I could eat the food that makes the unclean animals unclean.

So he's at that point where he goes, it couldn't get any worse.

And he goes, hey, you know what I could do?

I can go home.

And in his mind, he goes, it'll never be the same.

It's not going to be like it was when I left.

But here's the kind of the statement of the whole lesson.

God's always what?

there. Some people may say, well, God wasn't with him. His dad wasn't with him, but where was his dad?

His dad was right where he left him. His dad was still there. God was still there. While he was

still a distance away, his father saw him and he took off running. As a matter of fact, God will

stop and go, okay, look, this is as far as I'm going with you when you're leaving. And if you want to go, go. But when you come back, God says, as soon as you make the first move, as soon as you make the first move and I know you're ready to come home, God runs to you.

And he wraps his arms around you and he treats you as if you've never left. As a matter of fact,

he says, when you get back, we're going to have a what? We're going to have a party. Every one of

these stories end in celebration. And I love that image that in the throne room of God, that there

is celebration when we realize that God is always there and we commit our life to him either for the

first time or after a struggle. Meanwhile, verse 25, meanwhile, the older son was in the field.

When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and

asked him what was going on. Your brother has come, he replied, and your father has

killed the

fatted calf because he has him back safe and sound. The older brother became angry and refused

to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, look, all these

years I have been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even

a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your

property with prostitutes comes home, you killed the fatted calf for him. My son, the father said,

you are always with me and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because

this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. You know, I know preachers

a lot of times have a hard time figuring out what to do with that particular part of the story because what he's doing is he's looking at this crowd of people and the people that are upset are

the older brother, that they're upset that Jesus is coming and maybe being, you know, a little more

inclusive. What's the inclusive part of this story? Go back to chapter or to verse one. Now, the tax

collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus, the people that they thought weren't

worthy of the message, right? They had a lot of things that they needed to work on in their life,

so they weren't worthy of hearing the message of Jesus. They weren't good enough. And the Pharisees

and the teachers of the law, they really struggled with this. And this is his message to them.

He's looking at them and going, you've always been here. I still love you. I love you because

you've never left. I love you because you don't have the same things to work on. I love you because

you've been faithful. And to me, that's so important. It's so powerful to know that, hey, look, if

you've been here and you've always been here, I'll look at it. This is how I've got it written in my

notes. To our older members, you are still important. That's what I wrote down earlier this week. To our older church members, I've thought a lot about you as I've thought about

this passage because we talk a lot about new and growing and moving forward and excitement about

new things. And sometimes when we talk about new things, new things, new things, it's easy to

forget that for those that have been here for a lot longer than the rest of us, that you've been

here long enough that the old things used to be new and the new things used to be old and the old

things became new again. Like, you've been here a minute, and sometimes it's easy to forget,

for us to forget that—I thought about this this morning—some of you have been here long enough

for our elders. You remember our elders when they were kids, and you remember our deacons when they

were born. That's been a minute, right? It's been a minute. But you are our foundation.

We stand here because of what you've done before we ever showed up.

And my message to you is the same as the message of Jesus in this story.

You've always been here, and I love you for that.

And I want you to know that as we talk about new things and excitement about new things,

that that's never to the exclusion of any of you.

Because we wouldn't have the opportunity to grow

if you hadn't have been laying the foundation for us for the years that you've been here.

and had not had seasons of growth in the past

before any of us ever focused on this season of growth.

And Jesus says, all I have is yours

because you've always been here.

And I think that message is still the same.

He says, all I have is yours.

The journey that you're on

is gonna bring you to a place

where you get to inherit all the things

that Jesus has promised

because of your faithfulness,

because of your encouragement, because of the way you have loved in the gospel.

And I want you to know this morning that I love you for that,

and that I thank God for you every opportunity that I can,

that you're not the angry older brother.

That's not what I'm saying,

but I want you to know that you're never a forgotten brother or sister in this church,

even though maybe sometimes we get more excited about the future.

maybe in our conversation, we are equally as excited about those of you who have made sure

our past has stayed secure so that we can have a future. Because even in your life, God is always

what? God has always been there. And you can probably speak about that to us in ways that we

don't even understand yet. So whether you're in the phase of a sheep, a coin, a younger

son,

or an older son, God is there. He rescues, he pursues, he forgives, and he reassures. To me,

that's the message of Luke chapter 15. The question isn't, where is God maybe as much, but it's, will I let him carry me? Will I let him find me? Will I let him welcome me?

Or will I let him remind me of my place in his family? But regardless of where you are,

His call is the same.

Come home, trust me, and rejoice in my presence.

That's our call today.