

**“Tell Me the Stories of Jesus;
Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort”
“Lost and Found Part II”**

As we continue in our sermon series “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus; Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort,” we have focused on the parables in the gospel of Matthew. This week we jump to the gospel of Luke and focus on two of the three parables in the fifteenth chapter. This trilogy of stories looks at being lost and found. Last week we heard Matthew’s version of the shepherd who had one hundred sheep and left the ninety nine in the wilderness in order to find the one who was lost. This week we are looking at the other two stories in Luke, the woman who had ten coins and lost one and the father who had two sons, better known as the story of the prodigal son. Amy-Jill Levine has some interesting thoughts on that last story in her book *Short Stories by Jesus*. May this week bring new insights to each of us as we rediscover these two great parables of Jesus. ----Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Lost and Found Part II”**

Prayer for the Week *(inspired by John 15:1-3, 11-32)*
Father, it was said of the Prodigal Son that he “came to himself.” Help us to wake up to ourselves, and to You. Set us free from the illusion of trying to be perfect so that we might be more fully human. Help us not to chase after an imaginary life, and to find satisfaction in our real lives. And turn us away from our self-rejection so that we might see that Your arms open in welcome. Amen. ~ written by Ann Siddall, in *Lent to Easter liturgies: Year C*. Posted on the website of the **Stillpoint Spirituality Centre**. <http://stillpoint.unitingchurchsa.org.au/>

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, 8/07/17 Luke 15: 1, 8-10, Romans 8: 31-34

This parable of Jesus is so well known. It is important to note that this series of parables begins with religious grumbling about all the sinners who were gathering around Jesus. All three parables focus on being lost and found. The woman has lost a coin and when she finds it, she throws a party. Like the shepherd last week, the lost is found and celebrated. Paired with these verses from Romans 8 is a reminder that if “God is for us, who can be against us.” Like the shepherd and the woman, God seeks the lost and rejoices. This affirmation of faith and of God’s spirit is powerful and true. The peace of God comes from the deep knowledge that God is never far from his beloved children. God guides, directs and surrounds each one with a Divine Presence. In what ways do you live out that faith and experience the joy that you have been found and redeemed?

Tuesday, 8/08/17 Luke 15: 11-10

This story of the “prodigal” or “lost” son is so well known. In this story, the son chooses to leave and to be “lost” in a sense. It is in “hitting” bottom, that the younger son “comes to himself.” Somehow in the pig slop, in his degradation, he realizes how good he had it, and how good his father’s workers/servants lived. This son, was willing to be hired as a servant and work for his father in acknowledgement of his wrong doings and his sins. He didn’t expect forgiveness, but he did long to do what was right. He had seen not only the high life, but truly the low life of hunger, unemployment and homelessness. Do you think this is one of the ways the “spirit intercedes for us” and “how God is for us?”

Wednesday, 8/09/17 Luke 15: 20-24

He goes home, throws himself at the feet of his father and offers his heart wrenching apology. The father has been waiting and watching and puts his arm around his son, gets him out of the rags he is wearing and throws a party to celebrate. This father is absolutely crazy in the minds and hearts of religious and righteous people. Sinners don’t get parties. Sinners are to be punished and humiliated so that they might learn from their bad behavior. How the scribes and Pharisees must have been shocked! How the sinners listening to Jesus must have rejoiced. Although this story is now so familiar after 2000 years, some ways it is still as shocking. The lost is found and there is much joy! In what ways have you welcomed the lost with open arms?

Thursday, 8/10/17 Luke 15: 25-30

The older brother is furious. Most people who abide by the rules get angry over this story of Jesus. Have you ever wondered why the scoundrels always get a party? How often do the people who do what is right, do what is good and follow the rules get a party for no apparent reason? In many ways it is ridiculous. The younger brother just comes home, he hasn’t made restitution, he hasn’t earned anything, he just shows up and says he is sorry. The older brother feels like he has been taken advantage of for all these years. Often times in the church, or in religious institutions, the older “brother” lives. People follow the rules, do what is right and when a sinner comes in, everybody gets excited. It seems so unfair. Do you identify more with the older brother or with younger brother or with the father? How do you experience this story? Is it fair? Is it right?

Friday, 8/11/17 Romans 8: 35-39

Paul drives his point home, “Who will separate us from Christ’s love?” “Will trouble or distress or harassment, or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” NO! “In all these things we win a sweeping victory.” How? “Through the one who loved us.” With deep faith and hope and love Paul writes these words not only to the Romans but to generation after generation of those who follow. Being “found by God” offers a peace that nothing can take away from us. Not one thing can separate God’s beloved children from Divine Love and Grace. This is truly good news for all people. Today, say a prayers of thanks and praise for this love and grace that will never let you go.