

**“Tell Me the Stories of Jesus;
Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort”
“Lost and Found Part 1”**

We are in our summer sermon series “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus; Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort.” Using Amy-Jill Levine’s book *Short Stories by Jesus* as a springboard, this series will help us look at the stories Jesus told in new ways. Jesus’ listeners may and probably did hear these stories very differently than we do in the twenty-first century. This week’s parable is found in both Matthew and Luke. The version in Luke is part of a trilogy and we will read the other two stories next week in worship. This week we focus on Matthew’s version of the Shepherd and the lost sheep. His version is set among a series of sayings with a focus on children and their vulnerability. God seeks out the lost and longs not to “lose” anyone .---Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Lost and Found Part 1”**

Prayer for the Week

*Jesus, Master, we are listening for your Word.
Give us your Holy Spirit,
so we might hear your Good News
in the words of scripture and preaching.
Teach us to seek you always and to respond to your call.
We pray for the sake of your holy name.
Amen. (written by Nathan Williams)*

Study Guide

7/31/17 Matthew 18: 10-14

In this parable, Jesus speaks of a shepherd who has lost one of his sheep. His image of a hundred is one of someone of means. Most people didn't have that many animals. So the loss of one may be more noticeable when there are only a few. Here, though, the shepherd is very aware of the loss and leaves the ninety nine to fend for themselves, then rejoices when the one is found. Jesus places this story in the midst of how to take care of the weakest and most vulnerable among them: the children. Jesus is pretty harsh about behavior particularly in harming children. Perhaps the question raised is how often do I, or how often do we seek out the lost and the vulnerable?

8/01/17 Romans 8: 26-27

These words from Paul are a good follow up from yesterday's parable and question. "The Spirit helps us in our weakness." There are so many vulnerable people, so many causes and ministries that need help, so many who are forgotten and forsaken. No one person can do it all, but all can pray. Paul promises when words fail, when actions fail, when there is no energy or ideas that seem to be able to make a difference, the Spirit takes our inarticulate longings and gives rise to prayer. I don't know about you, but sometimes I may pray "wrongly." Paul offers this gift of hope and faith, that in the midst of struggle, pain and uncertainty it is God's presence and Spirit that will give voice to the deepest longings of our hearts and souls. Today, spend some time in God's presence without words and let the Spirit speak for you and to you.

8/02/17 Romans 8: 28-30

These verses are often used to justify "predestination" or the theology that some are saved and some are not and that God knows already who that may be. Verse 28 is used sometimes in ways that are very destructive in the midst of tragedy. "We know all things work together for good for those who love God," is a pretty powerful statement, but difficult to swallow in the midst of pain, grief and uncertainty. Perhaps remembering the Shepherd who goes and seeks the lost, might be helpful in this metaphor. I do not believe God wills evil or tragedy, but I do believe that in the midst of it, God is present and that God works to bring some sort of hope, peace and grace to the pain of our world. In other places, Paul reminds us that grace is for all people, and that God is at work in the world to save it. How do you experience God's goodness in the midst of grief, pain and uncertainty?

8/03/17 Matthew 18: 10-14

As you re-read this parable, what did you experience after reading the Romans passages these last two days? How does this story of Jesus impact your spiritual life? Have you been lost and found by Jesus when you were afraid? Have you felt left out in the wilderness when others have been found? Who do you think are the little ones to which Jesus is referring?

8/04/17 Luke 15: 1-7

In this version of the shepherd and the sheep, the setting is quite different. Jesus is being criticized about the company he keeps and how he welcomes outsiders and sinners and eats with them. In this version the shepherd throws a party when the lost sheep is found. There is no mention of "little ones" unless the sinners are the ones in which God is rejoicing because they have been lost and found by Christ. Sunday we will engage with the other parables or stories from this trilogy. Today, ponder the Savior who entertains and welcomes sinners and outsiders and children and the vulnerable. Take some time to pray with sighs too deep for words that we as a church might be a place that welcomes the ones who Jesus welcomes.