



Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
Pastor Neal Buckaloo
Sunday, September 12, 2010
"Where is My GPS"

Cell phone, map, compass, GPS. How can I get lost? Disconnected?

The cell phone may be out of service range. I may have walked off the map. With my compass and no map I am guessing. The GPS will give me longitude and latitude measures, but without a map, how do I discern the direction and trail to take?

What does it mean today to be lost? Well, certainly in Jesus' day it meant to be a non-practicing Jewish person. One who perhaps engaged in daily activity that precluded their being religiously righteous. Persons who butcher animals or buried the dead were not ritually clean. Those who did not observe the religious holidays were not considered righteous. For the Scribes and Pharisees, they were persons who disregarded God and God's commands; who lived their lives apart from God and God's discerned will.

Luke 15: ¹ Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.

² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

They are thinking if Jesus is seeking out sinners then he must be one of them.

Jesus responds to the Scribes and Pharisees with two parables in the text read today. First is the parable of the lost sheep. How lost is the sheep? This sheep is not to be found! Jesus asks, "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?" The lost sheep has no tracking device round its neck. The sheep has wandered off, too distant to respond to the shepherd's voice, too disoriented to know its way back to the flock.

The shepherd literally needs to walk the hillsides, checking every rock outcropping or craves to see if by chance the lost sheep is there. Such a diligent search is motivated by a deepening concern for the well-being of the sheep. As time passes the concern grows deeper.

Upon finding the sheep, what happens? There is a ride home on the shoulders of the shepherd. There is rejoicing – a party. ⁶ And when (the shepherd) comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'

We too can wander away. We can wander away from family, friends, what we know to be right. We can stray away from God. When we do, we find ourselves alone. Those who get in trouble with us will tell us they are our friends – but they will not be there when the trouble gets too deep.

We do not have to 'get in trouble' to find ourselves lost, estranged from God. We can just wander away – mindlessly self-absorbed, carried away by the cares of the day, the distractions of the moment. What does it mean to be spiritually lost?

To be spiritually lost is to be disconnected to the One who created you. To really know who you are you need to be connected to the Creator – who formed you. It is foundational. The disconnect from God does not start with a specific sinful act. It starts before that, when we are so filled with ourselves that we move away from God. We think we can figure it out on our own. And it is subtle. Have you ever make more commitments than you can keep? I have. So who do you let down. Too many promises made, so someone pays and is disappointed. Pastors do that when they make promises to parishioners and to their family and something has to give. More often than not, when I did that it was my family who was left disappointed. How can you make up for a missed piano recital or ball game for one of your children? You can't. The recital is over and the game is finished and you are not there. And I know that you don't have to be a pastor to have that happen.

Being connected to God is living out at least the two great commandments of scripture. Mark 12: ²⁸One of the scribes . . . asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the first of all?" ²⁹Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' ³¹The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

So how easy is it to do those two things 24/7? I know I can't. We cannot. Even our best intentions fall short, our best intentions toward God, toward those in our own household, toward our neighbor. That is why we begin worship here the way we do. We come together as a gathered community and confess together that we have fallen short. We ask God to forgive us. Make us renewed before God so that we can try again to walk with Jesus, see with Jesus, live with Jesus.

When we fall short, when we fall away, when we loose our way and are lost, God will notice. The Good Shepherd will hunt for us and find us. Like precious coins for the woman in Jesus' parable, we will be sought out when we are lost.

And God makes plain in Jesus that God will seek us out – relentlessly. Not only that, but ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Coming back to Jesus is a sweet time, a time of rejoicing, a time to celebrate. Here is a reunion with the one who made us, who seeks us, who forgives us, who anchors us as God's own in our Baptism.

Like so, the woman who, having lost one of ten special coins, does light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she (has found) it. ⁹ When she has found it, she

calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'

These two parables of Jesus tell us three things. One, each of you is valuable to God. That value is based in God's great desire to be in relationship to you and for your well-being as a part of God's creation. So, it is not something you have done or achieved that makes you valuable but God's own desire to be in relationship to you.

Two, no matter how lost you get, God will seek you out. In the parables, the lost sheep required diligent searching. The lost coin required lighting a lamp and sweeping the house in order that the coin was found. There is a Psalm which points to this tenacious character of God. It is Psalm 139.

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

Third, and perhaps most important, the God who created you rejoices at your return.

¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Welcome home.