“I Once Was Lost, But Now Am Found”
Isaiah 53:6; Luke 15:1-10
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Introduction: Bunny-Lovey

Being Lost

In these two parables, Jesus powerfully shares with us who we really are. The imagery of sheep is a common one in the Scriptures, primarily because they lived in a rural society, where sheep and shepherds were common. Jesus, in fact, described Himself as our Good Shepherd (John 10), and often in Scripture, God is our Shepherd (Psalm 23 and Ezekiel 34). Shepherds literally live and die for their sheep, often having sheep in the same flock for many years, since sheep were raised for wool. Shepherds know each sheep by name and sheep know the distinctive voice and call of their shepherds. The shepherds are able to track sheep for miles by their tracks. Shepherdd walk in front of the sheep, leading them to safe pasture.

We then are the sheep of God. Sheep have some basic habits that have not changed throughout time. Sheep are prone to wander and to go astray, for they regularly imagine that the grass is greener on the other side, and thus Sheep often got lost due to their mindless pursuit of appetites. They are stubborn and want their own way. Sheep have a herding instinct and so they gather in groups, which allows for security and protection. They are limited in intelligence, so they will unwittingly wander into danger, for they have no capacity to know what is coming next.

How about the lost coin? In the time of Jesus, it was a custom for a woman to have 10 silver coins woven into a bridal headdress. A Jewish girl would have literally scrimped and saved for such a headdress for her wedding day. She could not be married without it, so each coin was of great monetary and emotional value. Such a coin would be worth one full day's work, so losing one would be a big deal. It would be like losing our wedding ring today.

Both the images of a lost sheep and a lost coin are a reminder that we matter deeply to God. God values you, me, us highly. Also, we are lost. We cannot find ourselves; only God can do that. We are hopeless and helpless on our own.

Being Found

Jesus shares with us not only that we are lost, but that He loves us enough, cherishes us enough, treasures us enough and has enough grace to come and find us. Jesus makes it clear that there is effort and intentionality with God seeking us out, for the shepherd goes until He...
finds the sheep and the woman searches carefully until she finds it. What is even more important is that God seeks us, finds us, and then rejoices over finding us. If only finding God was as much a priority for us. If only we rejoiced over finding Jesus like he rejoices over finding us. St. Augustine reminds us: "God loves every person as if there was one else to love." Do we love God and love others in this way? Does our relationships with God and with one another matter this deeply to us?

This idea of God searching for us was revolutionary in ancient times, and still is today. Jesus has come in the flesh in order to find us, to save us, to show us the greatness and mercy of God's love. As Jesus affirms to us in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." God has gone to great lengths, sending His Son, the eternal Word into our world in the flesh in order to seek us and to save us. God has created us, knows everything about us, and knows of our hopelessness and helplessness apart from Him. As David reminds us in Psalm 103:14, "For he knows how we are formed, He remembers that we are dust." The heart of God yearns, aches and breaks for the lost. Does our heart weep over this too?

When God finds us, we regain our true place, which is only found in relationship to Him and in community and in relationship with the flock and body of Christ. We cannot grow in Christ individually or apart from His body. We also cannot be found apart from Him. Only in Christ, can we find peace, joy, hope, love and acceptance. Only in His community and body can we grow and flourish as God intends and wills for us. Finding who we have truly been created to be then happens only when we are found by Christ and when we find Jesus. As Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:25, "For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." In doing so, we now can learn how to live as God has always created us, intended for us, willed for us to. Isaiah affirmed this in 53:6, saying, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." As a result, we can join in praising God for His amazing grace, and affirm that we once were lost, but now are found. Praise God and thank God!