



LOST: Parables of a God Who Pursues

The Lost Silver: Lesson Learned From a Seeking Savior

Tim Badal | September 22, 2019

I have the great privilege of serving here at Village Bible Church as lead pastor. This morning we're going to continue in our series we've titled "Lost," where we're learning lessons about a seeking Savior. We're in Luke 15, a chapter that has been described as "The gospel within the gospel."

The reason why it's called this is because this is where Jesus shared with a mixed audience three stories about finding things that are lost. He did this to remind us that we are lost people as well. The Bible not only says we're blind, it goes so far as to say we're dead and need to be brought back to life. Jesus used the metaphor of being lost to demonstrate the great route God has taken to find us.

The first story Jesus told was about a good shepherd who went after the one sheep out of his flock of 100 which had gone astray, bringing it back to the fold. In today's story we'll learn about a woman who lost one of ten coins and who went to great lengths to find that coin.

Then over the next two weeks we'll study the very famous story of the prodigal son, a son who left home in rebellion to live in sin, leaving his loving and caring father. He went to a far-off country to sow his wild oats, but in doing so he lost much of what he would consider his life. So he made the decision to return home. Then the following week we'll look at the story of the son who stayed home, yet still was far from his father and therefore was lost in a different way.

God's purpose in these stories was to communicate one important truth, which is that although we are lost as sinners, He loves us and has deep compassion for us in our lost state. For this reason, He seeks and searches to find us and bring us into His family and His Kingdom. This is giving us the very heart of God and the heart of the gospel, which is His diligent search to find and save that which was lost.

This morning we're looking at the story of the woman with a lost coin. Although it's a short story—only three verses long—it contains some great truths that we can apply to our lives. It is also an ongoing reminder that we, as God's people, are called to join Christ in the journey of seeking those who are lost and who need to be saved by His grace and mercy.

So just as we have been found and rejoice because of this, we now must turn our attention to the lost things—the lost sheep, the lost coins, the lost sons or siblings in our world. We need to ask the Lord to help us shine His light so they might be found. There are all kinds of great applications coming from these stories.

So let's turn our attention to Luke 15, starting in verse eight. After sharing the story of the lost sheep, Jesus continues with this:

⁸ "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And 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.' ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Last week we saw that part of the human condition is that we are prone to lose things. Whether we're neglectful or forgetful or simply too busy with all that's going on in our lives, we lose things. It might be our keys, cell phones, wallets or even our children. We can lose



all manner of things. It's all right; it happens. At times we can spend many hours searching, retracing our steps in an attempt to find the things we've lost.

Anything we lose is important to us, but I doubt you've lost anything that's worth two billion dollars. That's exactly what happened in 1911 at the Louvre Museum in Paris, France. It was a day like any other day, but as the security guard was closing the museum, he noticed something was missing—the Mona Lisa, one of the most famous pieces of art in the world. The Mona Lisa, painted by DaVinci and well known even to the least of art enthusiasts, was gone. Nobody knew where it was.

For two years, from 1911 to 1913, a great search went on looking for the Mona Lisa. There was great consternation as the police, detectives and even normal citizens went looking for it. A great reward was offered for this priceless piece of art. Where could it have gone? The picture didn't have legs. Someone had to have taken it.

Unknown to Europe, someone had taken it. A gentleman by the name of Vincenzo Perugia was a handyman working at the museum that day. There are different theories of why he took the painting. Some say, being an Italian and because the painting was done by an Italian, Perugia felt it needed to hang in an Italian museum, not a French one. Others say it was because he wanted to ask for a fortune in ransom. Nobody really knows why he did it and he never declared the reason himself. But here's what's amazing about this story. He literally took one of the most priceless pieces of art off the wall of the museum, put it under his arm with a cloth over it and walked out the front door. It wasn't high level espionage or high-level thievery. He just walked out with it.

For two years, the Mona Lisa did not hang in a museum, but sat in a broom closet. Only when Perugia felt like he could get a reward—which by that time had climbed to a million dollars—did he take it to the authorities saying he had found what everyone was looking for. But when he returned the piece of art, his story changed with each investigation. As a result, he was charged and convicted for one of the largest thefts, from a monetary value, in history. He apparently found grace with the jury however, because he only served seven months in jail. Still he never told anyone why he actually took the painting.

There were of course great celebrations when the Mona Lisa was returned to the Louvre. What's interesting is the fact that while the Mona Lisa was always known to be an amazing piece of art, it wasn't until after it gained this publicity that it became one of the best-known paintings in the world. Since 1913, the Mona Lisa has found its place securely in the Louvre with the reputation now of having been lost, but after much time and energy, was once again found.

Jesus told a story like that. Now, it wasn't the Mona Lisa. It wasn't a priceless work of art. In fact, it was only one of ten coins—and those coins really weren't all that valuable. It probably was worth about a day's wage. But to this woman, the coin was invaluable. In three short verses, Jesus reminds us of some incredible truths about being lost and found.

1. Lost people are important.

The first truth found in this text is that lost people are important to God, so by proxy they should also be important to us. Remember, Jesus was speaking to a mixed group of people. In Luke 15:1 we're told He was talking with tax collectors and sinners. They were the deplorables of their day. They were the ones no one wanted to hang out with. They had a past. They had been chided by the religious society around them as being good for nothing. These individuals had found a place in the ministry of Jesus. They loved His teaching, because it brought grace, mercy and compassion. But in that setting there were also the religious leaders, the Pharisees and scribes. The deplorables knew who these men were, because these were the men who kept them from worshiping in the temple. They were the men who told them they were sinners.

Nonetheless, Jesus was hanging around with the deplorables. He was eating with them and He was engaged in life with them. He had given relational space to them. While they loved it, the religious establishment hated it, grumbling about the people Rabbi Jesus was hanging out with. Here was a man Who said He was God, Who claimed to speak on God's behalf, yet He was associating with people the scribes and Pharisees were convinced God wanted nothing to do with.

So Jesus told them the reason He was hanging out with tax collectors and sinners was because they were the lost people He was seeking. To illustrate why lost things were important to God, He told these three stories. In His first story, one sheep out of a hundred sheep had wandered away. The shepherd went to find it, put it on his shoulders, carrying it back to the fold and to safety, rejoicing that it had been found.

Then Jesus pivoted to another story, this time featuring a woman. Before we get to the part where she lost something, the very mention of a woman as the main character would probably have caused the Pharisees to grumble even more. They were already grumbling because Jesus had asked them to put themselves into a shepherd's sandals. Shepherds were hated by the Pharisees. They were viewed as deplorable, sinful and ugly people. They were smelly and below the white-collar status of the leaders.

Now to double down, Jesus was asking them to put themselves in the shoes of a woman. As we know in first century culture, women were viewed as second-class citizens. They weren't allowed to speak or be a part of things. So the Pharisees had all the more to grumble about. "You want us to be a shepherd and now you want us to be a woman? This makes no sense."

But it actually made all the sense in the world. Jesus was reordering the social structure of first-century Palestine. What He was saying was, "No matter who you are, because you are God's creation and bear His image, you are loved by God." Shepherds are held in high regard today and I would hope women are as well, so we've come a long way in this regard. Yet we need to realize that while we don't deal with the same cultural things, in using these examples Jesus was reminding us that if we're going to learn anything from God while looking down our noses at others with a haughty attitude, we should expect nothing from Him.

When we realize that lost people are important to God, before we look at what they have or haven't done, we also need to be reminded to put ourselves in their shoes. We are lost. We've all been lost. We are all sheep without a shepherd. We're all coins in a dark and dirty place.

The coin was important because it served as a symbol.

This woman Jesus spoke about had lost a coin. We're told that she had ten, which helps us understand some of what's going on. In the culture it was common for a woman to have a headdress, a sort of gold bracelet that went around her head, with ten coins on it. When Jesus spoke of a coin, He used the term *drachma*, which was a Jewish coin about the size of our nickel. It wasn't as heavy as a nickel, but maybe had the weight of a small seashell. Somehow those coins were attached to a woman's headdress.

These headdresses with their coins were significant. First, the coins were a symbol that was given to women on their wedding day by their fathers. It would adorn their wedding day, as well as speak of the father's blessing. It indicated that the bride had been a good and faithful daughter up to the day she was given to her husband in marriage.

The father would say, "This is my gift to you, young man—my daughter. She has done everything I've asked of her and has my blessing. This headdress is the dowry I'm giving to this marriage." The ten coins were actually a kind of wedding band, but they also became part of her dowry.

You who are women can probably understand how she felt when she lost one of the coins, especially if you've ever lost your engagement ring or wedding ring. There is significance to them. There are things in our lives that carry more significance than simply their earthly value. When fire is threatening to consume them, or if we were somehow to lose them, some things have way more value to us than what the world would put on them. It might be an heirloom, a picture or some kind of correspondence. Some things remind us of certain people or events, so they carry great significance and thus to us great value. In the same way, this was the symbolism of her coin. It was a day's wage. In one sense she hadn't lost much; after all, she had nine other coins. But because of what it symbolized, she honored it greatly and now she had lost it.

The coin was important because it was her security.

Second, the coin brought her security. The father would give this dowry which she would wear all the days of her life. The only reason she would ever use those ten coins wasn't to buy the newest iPhone, to get a new outfit at the Palestinian mall or even to buy groceries. The only time she would use it would be in the case of her husband's death. If her husband died, she would be in peril, so she might use the money to close her husband's business and possibly get her back to her father's home, a brother's home or an uncle's home—someplace where she would be cared for until she remarried or until she herself died. These ten coins served as an insurance policy to bring her security, but now she had lost one of the ten.

When the coin was missing, it was seen as a scarlet letter.

There is yet another significant reason why she was so concerned about losing that coin. She could explain having only nine-tenths of the money her father had given her in case she had a calamity in which she would need it. But her greater concern was what people would think if one was missing. A coin was taken out of the headdress of a married woman if she had been found to be unfaithful to her husband. The chief leaders of the community would bring her into the town square and take one of those coins from her. In essence they would be saying she had not lived up to what her father had said about her and what her husband believed about her. So in that sense it was like a scarlet letter indicating that she had been unfaithful. It would blemish her reputation in her world.

Knowing this meaning, she realized the significance of having lost one of her coins. She therefore had the focused priority of finding what was lost so she could restore it to its proper place. This is the story Jesus told and in some ways it's similar to the story of the lost sheep. But there were differences as well. The sheep was lost because it had wandered away on its own four feet. A coin couldn't do that. Also,

the sheep had wandered far away and the shepherd had to leave the other sheep to search for it. But in this story, the coin was still in the house, so she did not have to go far looking for it.

Even though it might seem that Jesus repeated His point three times—the lost sheep, the lost silver, the lost son—if we look more closely and ask interpretive questions, we'll see that there are some important differences. He kept the main theme—that lost things need to be found—but he made other points as well.

Part of the reason Jesus did this is because the details in these stories would speak to different people. If you recall, He was speaking to two distinct groups of people. First, there were the tax collectors and sinners who had wandered far from God. Everyone knew this, including themselves. But Jesus was also speaking to the scribes and Pharisees who were in the house of God and believed themselves to be close to God. They believed themselves to not be lost, thus they were angry at those who wandered away. When we wander from God, it's easy to know we're lost. But has it ever dawned on you that you could be lost even while you're in God's house, believing yourself to be close to God?

That's where the Pharisees were. There wasn't anyone in that day closer to God than these men—at least when viewed from the outside. They did all the right things in all the right ways at all the right times. They had following God down to a science. They also demanded that everyone do things their way. But Jesus was indicating that they were as lost as anyone. They were the coin in the house of God. The coin was close to its master, but nevertheless it was lost. They are the "older brother" of the story of the prodigal son, who never left or wandered away, but who pointed to the sin of the younger brother. Yet he was also far off and in many ways was even farther from their father than the wandering son.

This is a word to each of us. There are those who have wandered away from God and there are those who seem to be doing their duty but have never entered into a relationship with God. Even if you're in the house of God, you are far from Him and you are lost. In these stories, Jesus is masterfully picking off each of us by applying different elements to our lives.

God's search for lost people is intense.

So the coin is lost. What does the woman do? She goes on a search, and from her example we learn that God's search for lost people is intense. Nowhere in the story of the lost sheep do we hear details about the search. All it says about the shepherd is that he searches until he finds the sheep. It must have involved persistence, endurance and great love.

In this story today, we're given three phrases that help us understand the woman's search. First, she lit a lamp, then she swept the house, and third, she searched diligently. It doesn't take much deduction to figure out why she would have had to light a lamp. Why do people turn on lights? Because it's dark and we want to see.

According to commentaries, archeological evidence is that first century homes in Palestine did not have many windows. That was because windows would not only let sunlight in, but also things like rain, wind, cold and even sandstorms. She might also have discovered her loss in the evening. But in any event, she lit a lamp so she could search in her dark house.

Second, the story says she swept her house. Why do we sweep houses? Because they're dirty. None of your houses are dirty, of course, right? No, we sweep and vacuum because there's always dust and dirt. In this woman's day, however, floors were not covered with tile, carpet or hardwood. It was probably cobblestone with lots of crevices where things could get lost. So we can picture her sweeping with one hand and holding the lamp in the other. And remember, the coin was only about the size of a nickel; it would be easy for it to have fallen into a crack somewhere. But she was searching diligently because her identity, security and reputation in the community was held in that coin.

We can imagine that the search took a while. If it had only been for five minutes, then the women of the community would not have known about her loss. It seems she had spoken to the women about it, because after she found it, she gathered her girlfriends—which is what the word literally means—to rejoice with her. Why would she have told the girls about her lost coin, but no one else? Because of the significance it had. Let's be honest, the guys would not have had any idea what losing a coin would be like. We have no coins. We can't put ourselves in her shoes, but no doubt the other women had also lost coins and were aware of how important her loss was.

Finally, we're told she found the coin. It doesn't say she found it outside the county or at her parents' house. She found it in her home where she had used the lamp and her broom to search for it. After that, she went to rejoice and celebrate with her friends, because that which was lost was now found.

We have to be careful when dealing with parables, knowing we can't read too much into them. We should not speculate beyond what is written in the text. Some commentaries and sermons are outstanding, because they sound so fanciful and wonderful, but we should never

go beyond what Jesus actually said. One commentator managed to put the entire Trinity into this story, saying that the light was the Holy Spirit and the broom was the Mosaic law.

Yet I am struck by what we can learn. To me, this is a perfect picture of what we know about Jesus Christ. Let me explain the things I see in this story about what Jesus does for us, then you can decide if I'm going too far with my interpretation. Here are the things I see.

Jesus entered a dark and dirty place.

The woman brought light into the house, she swept the floor and diligently searched until she found the coin. I would say this is a picture of how Jesus also entered a dark and dirty place, diligently seeking us until He discovered us who were lost. I'm actually not out in left field in this interpretation. We're told in John 1:14 that Jesus came to this world, put on flesh and made His dwelling among us. We beheld His glory, the glory of the only Son of God.

When Jesus entered this world as the King of the universe and the Son of the living God and put on flesh, the world He entered into was not like the world He came from. Heaven was full of light. Heaven was filled with purity and holiness. Heaven was a place where He was worshiped and adored by myriads of angels 24/7, 365 days a year. It was a glorious place.

But He came to earth for one purpose—to seek and save that which was lost. In order to seek us and find us, He had to come into a very different world, one that was filled with sin. The Bible tells us our sins have caused us to live in darkness. In fact, Peter put it this way in 1 Peter 2:9. He said we should praise the excellencies of Jesus, Who has called us out of darkness and brought us into His wonderful light.

Over two dozen times in the Old Testament and New Testament we are told that as unbelievers we live in darkness. Paul says in Ephesians that we are children of darkness and live in a dark world. Our sins keep us from seeing the light of truth, the light of Christ. This is why Jesus says in John 8:12, "*I am the light of the world...*" He's saying, "I shine My light so that people in darkness might find their way back to God."

Jesus not only entered a dark place, He also entered a dirty place, just as the woman had to sweep the floor because the coin had fallen into a dirty place. Don't think about your clean kitchen floors. This woman's floor might have been a dirt floor, or perhaps even a muddy floor depending on the weather. They might have put something over the floor to cover it, but it was still dirty. They could not have eaten on those floors. We could pull that off, but that wasn't something first-century people could do.

This picture reminds me of the world Jesus entered. Our sin is a stain upon our lives. We are told our sins are like crimson on what should be white wool (Isaiah 1:18). The New Testament tells us we are stained by our corruption from the world (2 Peter 2:19). Yet Jesus entered this dark and dirty place, shining the light of the perfect life He lived. He was not stained by our dark and dirty world, falling into its guile. He remained pure.

Jesus entered diligently, seeking until He discovered what was lost!

Jesus now goes about diligently seeking you and me. If you were part of a small group this past week, this was one of your discussion questions: "Tell your story about how God diligently sought you." I heard some great reports from some of the groups. There were different stories about how God met them. We heard today the story of how God met the Olsens. Their story is different from your story—but that's what's great about our testimonies. They are true and unique for each individual.

God has a way of changing lives by shining His light in the darkness to find that which was lost and then bringing us back to Him. God looks and finds with utter perfection. We'll talk more about this search as we continue in the story of the prodigal son and the prodigal sibling. But this is the gospel. Jesus entered a dark and dirty place, diligently seeking the lost until He finds them.

The celebration over finding the lost is inspiring.

As we go back to the story of the woman, she's now found her coin. In the story of the shepherd, he rejoiced privately, but there's no private rejoicing for this woman. She must have run to her girlfriends as soon as she found it, saying, "The coin that I had lost, I have found! Rejoice with me! Be excited for me!"

There's a reason why they would have been excited. It wasn't so much about the lost and found *drachma*. There was something of greater value at stake. The shepherd might have rejoiced with other shepherds, so in the same way the woman rejoiced with those who would understand the significance of finding a lost coin.

This gives us a picture of the celebration of what's going on with God when lost souls are found. There is a celebration over finding the lost that is inspiring. We need to look at this celebration both from a human perspective and from a heavenly perspective.

This is seen through a human perspective.

From a human perspective, the reason the women are excited about the coin that was found is they realize that as long as it was missing, it was not serving its purpose.

Let's say you were to go to the grocery store or to a restaurant to eat after the service today, Then when you're ready to check out, you're told, "That will be \$32.95." You look in your wallet for the \$50 bill you expect to find, but it's not there. Do you tell the person, "I know you can trust me. I had the \$50 bill, but I don't know where it is now. But can I use it to pay my bill?" No. The person would respond, "Without an actual \$50 bill, you can't pay me." You're either going to return the groceries or you're going to be washing dishes. We can't use lost money for anything.

Likewise, the lost coin had no purpose for its existence unless it was in the hands of someone who owned it. Listen carefully. Lost people have no purpose without their Creator. So maybe you're lost today and are wondering, "Why can't I find the meaning of life? What is the significance of living this life?" It's because God created you for a purpose and as long as you live apart from Him, you are not living the purpose for which you were created.

Is it the only purpose you can have? No. By His grace, God has given us the ability to love, work and serve without Him. But our number one purpose in life is to be involved in a relationship with the Almighty. As long as we're lost, we cannot accomplish the greatest purpose for which we were made: to know Him, worship Him, serve Him, receiving the immense joy and peace that comes with being devoted to our Creator.

If this describes you, then you are that lost coin who is missing its true purpose—the great redemptive gift of God. He doesn't just leave us in our lost condition, but He searches after us. Even though we're lost, He loves us and wants us to be with Him.

This is seen through a heavenly perspective.

Jesus ended his story about the lost coin in a similar way to how He ended the story of the lost sheep. He turned the attention away from the home to heaven. He said in Luke 15:10, *"I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* In the lost sheep story, He just mentioned the joy in heaven. But now He more specifically speaks of the angels rejoicing when a sinner repents and comes to Christ. What do the angels have to do with this? Why does He mentioned them? First, there is a celebration in heaven because God is at work on earth. But beyond this, the angels know something we forget about.

Remember that before the foundation of the world, the angels worshiped and adored the three persons of the Trinity in community in the heavenly realm. This went on for all of eternity past. We don't of course know how long ago God created the angels, but it was long before God created us. For a long time this awesome celebration of worship and adoration for Who God is was taking place.

Then at some point, there entered into the heart of one of the chief cherubs, Lucifer, the idea that he could become like God (Ezekiel 28; Isaiah 14). He was one of the head angels, one of the most powerful and beautiful angels. Yet somehow pride welled up inside him. His beauty and power were so great that when he turned against God, a third of the other angels believed he was able to do this and they followed him.

So if you have the idea that the devil is some sort of weak patsy, remember that a third of the angels thought Lucifer could take on God and win. But in that moment, in that place of perfection, God saw the rebellion and dismantled it. He literally threw the angels out of heaven. We're told in Scripture that some angels were thrown into gloomy dungeons, chained in hell. Yet others, including the devil, were allowed to prowl around our planet like lions seeking to devour us. We read in the New Testament how Jesus exorcised these free demons from people.

So the angels Jesus was referring to in this parable were the two-thirds of the angels who remained loyal to God. They were watching what God was doing with human beings. We need to think from a heavenly perspective. These angels had watched God create the universe, then after a third of the angels were sent to hell or to earth, He did a new thing. He created man and woman "a little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:5-11a).

So we're lesser in the superstructure of things and are not stronger than they are. We are also created in God's image. When God put Adam and Eve in the garden, for a while they did what the angels did in eternity past: they worshiped and glorified God. But then at one point they were tempted to believe they were like God or even better than God (Genesis 3). They could decide what they wanted to do, when they wanted to do it and how they wanted to do it.

Those angels that were watching probably thought, "Oh boy, we've seen this before. God is going to cast these humans into hell too. His wrath and judgment will happen again. Just like Lucifer and our buddies who rebelled against God, so it will be for these lesser creatures, the man and woman."

Here's something important to realize. When angels rebelled against God, He pursued them to punish them. When humans rebel, God pursues us to pardon us. Do you get it? The writer of Hebrews speaks of "so great a salvation." We're told in 1 Peter 1:10-12 that the angels look intently into the plan of redemption. Why? They're trying to figure out what it is about men and women that made them so special to God that instead of destroying them, He delivered them.

We forget how lost we were. We forget how dark and dirty the place we came from was. We need to remember how God lifted us up into the heavenly realms and gifted us with every blessing under heaven. Although we were lost, now we are found. It's no wonder why John Newton wrote, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see."

Like the demons, we have sinned and rebelled against God. But what did God do to deliver us and pardon us? He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to live on earth and be the perfect Lamb Who would be sacrificed for our sins. When we realize that while we have little value in the economy of the world, God chose to put a price tag on us that is incredibly high and He has said we're worth the price. For this reason, God has chosen to diligently search until He finds those who are lost.

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