

Tell Me the Stories of Jesus: The Lost Coin
A Message on Luke 15:8-10
For Huntsville First United Methodist Church
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Luke 15:8-10 (NIV)

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

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Today we return to the “Lost Chapter” of the Bible, Luke 15, as we continue our sermon series on the parables of Jesus by exploring the Parable of the Lost Coin.

As we mentioned a few weeks ago, this parable is one of three that we find in the 15th chapter of Luke. The first is the lost sheep, the second is the lost coin, and the third is the prodigal son, or the lost son.

During his ministry on earth Jesus focused a lot on lost things, and particularly the importance of reaching the lost. We are to continue that work today.

One of the challenges facing the church today is to focus outward rather than inward. Too often we focus too much on taking care of “our own,” becoming comfortable in the status quo with no interest in bringing more members into the church.

We become lulled into complacency by the comfort of knowing everyone (or almost everyone) in church, by the regularness of routines. We settle into our religious Lazyboys and don’t want to get out.

But that’s not what Jesus wants us to do. That’s not what Jesus calls us to do.

John Wesley knew this. Consider this message he gave to pastors: “You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most. It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care

of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance.”

Back in 2003 (which is further back than I think it should be) there was a movie that came out that was based on some true events that happened back during the depression in the 1930s. The title of the film was “Seabiscuit” and it was about a racehorse that shouldn’t have won races actually winning races. But the real theme of the film was about grace and second chances.

The movie told the story of a jockey named Red Pollard, played by Tobey Maguire; the horses owner, Charles S. Howard, played by Jeff Bridges; and trainer Tom Smith, played by Chris Cooper.

The horse, named Seabiscuit, was smaller than other race horses. He was also temperamental and difficult to train. The original owners beat him, mistreated him, and finally gave up on him. They used him to train other race horses, running alongside them on the track during training runs, but being pulled back near the finish line so that the other horse, the real racehorse, could develop the habit of winning.

In the movie Howard, the owner, meets Smith, a down-on-his luck horse trainer and drifter. Smith has just saved an injured racehorse that was going to be put down, or euthanized, because of a leg injury. Smith gets the horse, takes some herbs and wraps them around the horse’s leg, and works to help the horse heal, even though he knows it can no longer race.

When Howard asks Smith why he’s trying to heal the injured horse, Smith responds, “Because I can. Every horse is good for something. Shoot, he could be a cart horse, or a lead pony, and he’s still nice to look at. You don’t throw a whole life away just ‘cause it’s banged up a little bit.”

Later in the movie Howard and Smith are trying out jockeys to ride Seabiscuit. Red Pollard gives it a try, but during a race doesn’t see a horse coming up beside him. After being pressed by Smith as to why he didn’t see the horse coming, Pollard finally admits that he is blind in one eye.

This is a big deal for a jockey. Peripheral vision is very important for a jockey to have in horse racing, and not having vision in one eye severely limits peripheral vision. Smith, the trainer, wants Howard to fire Pollard for lying to them about being blind in one eye. Howard, though, makes the decision to keep him on as Seabiscuit’s jockey.

When pressed by Smith on why he wants to keep Pollard, Howard puts a hand on Smith’s shoulder, leans in to him, and says, “You don’t throw a whole life away just ‘cause it’s banged up a little bit.”

Seabiscuit, owned by Howard, trained by Smith, and ridden by Pollard, goes on to be one of the winningest race horses in history. And more importantly, during the depression, it gave people a renewed sense of hope.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to give hope to people today, especially those that need it the most. And that hope is found in Jesus Christ.

Jesus tells the parable of the lost coin to teach us that even when people are lost, they still have value. And like the woman who lights a lamp and searches for the lost coin, we are to search for those who are lost using the light of Jesus Christ.

I often say that God doesn't call us to the comfortable places. And I have personally found that to be true. And looking for lost souls is one of those uncomfortable places. One of the reasons Christians are reluctant to share their faith with others is a fear of rejection. And I get that. I don't like rejection, either. But we shouldn't let that keep us from living out the great commission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. There is holiness in doing the work that God calls us to do, even if we don't have a 100 percent success rate. (And we won't have a 100 percent success rate.) We are called to plant seeds of faith, even though they may not germinate and grow for years.

A few weeks ago we sang an old hymn that really speaks to looking for lost souls. "Rescue the Perishing" is a great hymn and is even found in the Cokesbury hymnal. (And if it's in the Cokesbury hymnal, you know it's got to be good!)

Here is the first verse of that hymn:

Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.

That is what we are called to do as Christians: rescue the perishing. We are to tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.

Jesus calls us to light a lamp and look for the lost coin, to seek out and meet the lost wherever they may be, and lead them to salvation. And when one of the lost is found, we are to celebrate joyfully!

Now there are some things to keep in mind as we engage in this mission. First is that we need to be loving, but in doing so we don't want to condone sin. Jesus never condoned sin. He doesn't want to save people only for them to continue to live in sin. No. It is through the redemptive and transforming power of Jesus that people are changed and sin is overpowered.

As Paul writes in Romans 6:1-4: "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are to live a new life. And part of that new life is looking for the lost. As John Wesley said, we have nothing to do but save souls.

There are so many souls here in Huntsville and Walker County that are in need of a relationship with Jesus Christ, to experience the life changing grace available to them through Christ. We are to remind ourselves that "You don't throw a whole life away just 'cause it's banged up a little bit." We are called to go out and look for those who are "banged up a little bit." Every person is valued by the Father. Our job is to make sure they know that.

So my challenge to you this week is to look for the lost. Just as the woman who lost the coin lit a lamp and swept her house until she found the coin, we are to shine the lamp of Jesus into the dark places of our world, telling and showing others the power of the love of Jesus Christ.

As Jesus says, "... there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.