Have you ever lost something of value that was really important, that really mattered to you and you couldn’t find it? Maybe it was your car keys or your wallet or purse or cell phone or even a wedding ring. Once you realized it, what did you do? You dropped everything you were doing and immediately went looking for it. Do you remember when you found it? Do you remember the joy and the relief that you felt? How many of you have ever lost a child in a store or a mall or somewhere like that?

I remember when Jonathan was a toddler and the twins were still infants that Dale was often afraid that someone would take one or all of our children. I didn’t have that fear … until the day I’m about to mention. We lived in South Dakota at that time and we were all in Sears one day in the kids clothing dept. with the twins in a stroller and Jonathan walking. One minute Jonathan was there and the next he was gone. I walked down one aisle and up another to find him figuring that he could not have gotten very far in a short time. But I didn’t find him right away as I had thought. Then I got scared! What if someone had taken him? Dale stayed with the twins and searched nearby while pushing their stroller. I widened my search and began running up and down aisle after aisle looking for him and calling to him. I was frantic. After what seemed like an eternity but was probably only a few minutes, he just sort of reappeared as if nothing had happened. What relief and what joy!

If that has ever happened to you or when it does know this – you will have just seen, and felt, the heart of God. The heart of God!! When my son was lost, at that point, there was only one thing on the planet that could make me happy. Neither fame nor fortune at that point would have put a smile on my face. The only thing that would have made me happy was for my lost son to be found.

Key Take Away: God is more than a little concerned about the lost and His community in heaven rejoices when the lost are found.

That word “lost” is a word that I want you to burn into your mind and brand onto your heart. If you want to understand the Bible, if you want to see the heart of God, if you want to know why the church exists, if you want to know why preaching and teaching and reaching every person we can with the good news is so important, it all revolves around the word “lost.”

As we study the parable before us it is really important to understand who Jesus was talking to and why He told this story. The key is found in the first two verses of Luke 15.

“*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and, saying, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.*’” (Luke 15:1-2)

There were always two types of people around Jesus. There was the rebellious crowd and the religious crowd. There was what some would call today the “wrong” crowd and the “right” crowd. The Pharisees considered themselves to be the “right” crowd and it drove them nuts that Jesus hung around with the “wrong” crowd. The Pharisees couldn’t understand why someone who claimed to be the Son of God would hang around with sinful people.

We are going to learn something today that goes against the grain of everything we have been taught by our parents. Before I say this, I know you have to be careful in hanging around with the wrong kind of people, because you’ve got to be spiritually mature enough to make sure you influence them rather than the other way around. Where we have been told all of our lives, “Don’t hang around with the wrong crowd” here is what we are going to learn today.

It is not the job of those who think they are the right crowd to look down on those they think are the wrong crowd. It is the job of the right crowd to look for the wrong crowd, because the only difference between the right crowd and the wrong crowd is this: if the right crowd has been found the wrong crowd is still lost. Jesus tells a parable to show us how we should think of and act toward those who are lost.

“*So he told them this parable: 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?”* (Luke 15:3-4)

This is actually a rhetorical question that Jesus asks. He finally found something that everybody would agree on - He, the sinners, the tax collectors and the Pharisees. Everyone knew that if a shepherd loses a sheep that shepherd is going to go after that sheep, because good shepherds don’t care about some of the flock or even most of the flock. They care about all of the flock and especially when one sheep gets lost.

Sadly, a sheep that is lost doesn’t even know that it is lost. The reason why the shepherd has to keep careful watch over the flock is because sheep just naturally wander away. If they ever wander away they don’t come back for two reasons: they are not smart enough to figure out how to find their way back, and what is even worse is they don’t even realize they are lost.

In my story about Jonathan, he didn’t even know he was lost. Understand this: a person, far from God is lost and doesn’t know it. He is like a blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there.

Then Jesus tells about a coin that is lost. “*Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek carefully until she finds it*?” (Luke 15:8)

Again, most women hearing Jesus tell this would have been nodding their heads. No doubt this woman lives in a typical Palestinian home, which is about the size of a one-car garage and most of them did not have windows. They only had one door, which would let some sunlight in, so most of the time the house would be very dark and pretty cold.

This woman was not wealthy since she only had ten coins. She realizes that one of the coins is lost and immediately she begins to turn that house inside out trying to find this lost coin until she finds it.

Jewish scholar C. G. Montefiore saw in these parables a distinctive and revolutionary theme: “God actively seeks out sinners and brings them home. The rabbis agreed that God would welcome the penitent sinner. But it is a new idea that God is a seeking God, a God who takes the initiative.”

Why did the shepherd look for the sheep and why did the woman look for the silver? Because, it bothered them that one of them was lost. How did they know they were lost? Because, they counted. The shepherd counted the sheep and the woman counted the silver. Jesus’ point in this parable is that people count. More than sheep or money, people count. In our recent cultural and political environment: Black lives matter! Blue lives matter! ALL lives matter!!! And not just in this life but for eternal life. Lose one here. Lose one there. No big deal! How wrong that is!!!

I want you to imagine this. When Jonathan went missing do you think I would have said to Dale, “That’s alright. Just let him go. We still have and Peter and Matthew.” Do you think I would have said, “Good news, our diaper bill just went down by a third!” Of course not!

To everybody else in the community one lost sheep wasn’t a big deal. To the other women in that neighborhood one lost coin wasn’t a big deal, but it was a big deal to that shepherd and a big deal to that woman, because it was their sheep and their coin. The point is every person on this planet belongs to God and lost people matter to God and what matters to God should matter to us.

Nothing makes God sadder than people who are lost. Nothing makes God gladder than when lost people are found. The Bible never says God throws a party when we tithe. The Bible never says God throws a party when we reach our budget. The Bible never says God throws a party when we pay off our debt. The Bible never says God throws a party when the service finishes in 59 minutes and 59 seconds, The Bible does however say that God throws a party when lost people are found.

One soul, one human being is worth more than all the sheep or silver coins in the world. God has called us, who have been found, to go to those who are lost and help God find them too. When we do, we can rejoice along with the angels in heaven, and then go and do it again. Amen