



<sup>1</sup>Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

<sup>3</sup>So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup>“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? <sup>5</sup>When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. <sup>6</sup>And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ <sup>7</sup>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.

<sup>8</sup>“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup>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.’ <sup>10</sup>Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

## “I was Lost, But Now I Am Found”

Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*“Let anyone with ears to hear, listen!”*

*Jesus said these words just before telling this parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin. One group of people was listening to what he had to say. It was the sinners and included in this group were the tax collectors. The other group grumbled about he was saying. They were the Pharisees and scribes. People who separated themselves from sinners. I know it’s early in the sermon, but it appears so far that since I still have the attention of your ears, you too must be sinners.*

*It bothered the Pharisees and scribes that Jesus not only welcomed and ate with sinners, but he also went looking for them. And whenever Jesus found a repentant sinner, we are told that you can hear the angels in heaven rejoicing. This has already happened once in our worship this morning. While we were singing our entrance hymn “O Worship the King”, the angels in heaven were rejoicing because they heard you confess that you were lost sinners and Jesus has found you and said, “Your sins are forgiven”. Yes today, we learn how to make the angels rejoice and break out into singing. And to give you a little heads up-I believe the angels will sing again before our worship is over today.*

*The Pharisees and scribes had been grumbling about the company Jesus has been keeping. And the grumbling only gets louder when Jesus tells the parable of going after the lost sheep and coin. They grumble because they think the angels should be singing about for all the good things they have been doing. They don't think that they are lost, and they should be the ones serenaded by the angels for their good behavior. They feel that the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the sinner should be put in time-out in silence to think about what they have done wrong. But Jesus tells us, it is the repentant sinner, the lost that is found, that makes the angels in heaven sing.*

*About 490 years ago, Martin Luther wrote these words, "If we neglect the biblical languages, the gospel will perish." Today's text is a good example how neglecting the original biblical language of Greek that the New Testament was written in can take away the good news for you and the heavenly angel's singing. After Martin Luther studied the Greek language, he realized that the Greek word for "repent"  $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\nu\omicron\epsilon\acute{\omega}$  (metanoēō) was not something that you decide to do. It is what will simply happen when you encounter Jesus. And the parable of the lost sheep and lost coin clearly tell how this works.*

*The only active part the sheep play in this parable is getting lost. This is what sheep do. They wander and get into trouble. But of course, Jesus didn't tell this parable to talk about sheep. Jesus knows we are very similar to sheep. The prophet Isaiah said sheep were acting the same way in his day when he said, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." The Pharisees and scribes thought they had the protection of the law which acted like a fence that kept them from becoming wandering sheep. But Isaiah said and Jesus knew that ALL are like sheep. Not SOME.*

*So, what happens when sheep wander away? Do sheep eventually come to their senses and come home when they know they are lost? This was not what we experienced a few years ago when my son had a flock of sheep. It was about this time of year when all his ewes had broken out of their fence. We were not looking for just one sheep. They all were lost. We found the largest group of them nearly a mile away from where they escaped. We questioned if we had found them all, but with the tall corn still in the field, it was nearly impossible to guess where the others might be. And maybe they would find their way back home. But days went by and they did not. We were reminded this is not what sheep do. It was over a month later when I was harvesting a corn field near our home when I couldn't believe my eyes. There were two of the lost sheep still alive between the unharvested rows of corn where I was combining. We loaded them up in the trailer and they were glad to be home.*

*Jesus does not do what we did. Jesus does not leave those that are lost to find their way home. He does not wait until he knows that lost lambs feel sorry for wandering away and then he goes out and finds them. No, Jesus leaves the flock of 99 in the wilderness to find the one that is lost. And notice, Jesus doesn't pen the other 99 sheep up in a good corral and fasten the gate securely while he goes looking for the lost sheep. Jesus leaves them in the wilderness. But Jesus does not forget them. He knows by the time he starts looking for the lost lamb, more will wander away. But this is what Jesus came to do. He finds the lost. And this is what makes angels sing.*

*I would like you to look at the bulletin cover of Jesus and the lamb that was found. Many images of lambs may come to your mind. Healthy lambs are very cute, and when they have all they need, they are fun to watch as they bounce around. But that is not what a lost lamb looks like. You likely are*

*familiar with another painting of Jesus holding and carrying a lamb while the other sheep are following, and the sheep are all looking at Jesus. But again, this lamb that Jesus is holding, looks quite healthy and if Jesus would let it down on the ground, it would easily follow along. Again, this is not the image of a lost lamb portrayed in the gospel for today. But the image I selected for the bulletin cover for today gives a better image of what a lost sheep looks like.*

*This lamb's ears are not perked up like a healthy lamb. There is no bounce left in the legs of this lamb. This lamb doesn't appear that it would be able to walk by itself. This lamb does not have the strength to or maybe it is ashamed look up to Jesus. You can see the folds of skin and if you were to pick it up, it would feel like you were lifting a wooly sack of broken bones. This lamb looks like it doesn't have long to live.*

*But then Jesus arrives. There is no conversation between Jesus and the lamb. Jesus doesn't scold the lamb or wait for an apology. Jesus knows what sheep do and Jesus knows what sheep need. Jesus picks up the lamb. Isaiah said, "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." When Jesus put the lamb, when Jesus puts you on his shoulders, he takes your sins and bears them on his shoulders.*

*This is the gospel, the good news, that Martin Luther said will perish if we turn what Jesus has done for you into something you can do for yourself. This is why Jesus told this parable to the Pharisees and scribes who thought they had no need for Jesus to save them. In fact, they thought they could be saved by keeping the law and never would be lost. This is the kind of thinking that silences the angels in heaven.*

*Being lost and then found is not a one-time event for you and me. You and I make the angels sing often. The good news is that Jesus does not limit the number of times that he will go after you and bring you home. Jesus has found you again today and has laid your sins on his shoulders.*

*Listen. I think the angels are rejoicing and gathering to sing. Amen.*