

### **Luke 15:1-10**

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’

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? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 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.” Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

‘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? 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.” Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.’

### **I Corinthians 13**

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

### **The Message of Faith David Dalke “Lost.....and.....Found”**

Two passages of Scripture this morning. The first one comes to us from the Gospel according to Luke, I read out of the 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter (see above). Then we hear the story from Paul as he talks to the people in Corinth. It's the love chapter. (See above).

Last month we did a workshop here in this church for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and their parents, about love. It was a human sexuality workshop on how we treat people and how we treat ourselves. How we honor each other. The first night, we asked everybody,

parents and youth, and those adults who were helping, we asked them, "I you could create the world all over again, what would you leave out? What would you leave out?" Well, somebody said wasps, someone else said jealousy, someone said war, hatred, disease, betrayal. And then one of our adults said beets, and another one said broccoli, and I started to think... I was the one who said disease, but if I'd thought a little harder, I would have said cottage cheese. That's never done much for me. In one of her last dying breaths, my mother said to me, as she pulled me close, "David, David, you'll never know how much cottage cheese you've eaten in your life."

Well, the next day our workshop ended and I went home only to find out there had been a shooting in Arizona. Six people dead and many injured. So we called a friend in Arizona and he said, "You know, I just get perplexed. I think we have a good world, and then all of a sudden I'm must scared. I just really get scared." I think about the people who come on the newscast in the evening and say "Good evening," and then they proceed to tell us why it isn't. And so I decided, well, what are the headlines really saying nowadays? What do these headlines say? So I copied down a few and of course, recently, Mubarak is out after 30 years of oppression, but there were 30 years of oppression and death and there were some people that died even trying to gain their freedom recently, and Cairo dissolves in chaos. "Egypt's President Fires the Cabinet." Then I read further and there's a Loveland teacher arrested, and the FBI takes over investigation of regional robberies, and the kidnapping suspects bond out of jail, and the police seek the driver who fled after a crash, and I start to ask myself, what does this world need? What does this old world need? (Choir sings, "What the World Needs Now")

They're right. They are absolutely right, and so was Paul. So was Paul when he talked to those people in Corinth. So was Jesus as he walked the earth, and as he died on it, all for love? I mean, Jesus told one story after another, one parable after another, and they were love stories, many of them. I mean, "What man of you," and he was talking about men, the gender male, "what man of you or boy of you, if you had one hundred sheep, and you were out in the wilderness and one of the sheep got lost. Wouldn't you go after that lost sheep," he said. "Wouldn't you go find it? And once you found it, wouldn't you take it and put it up on your shoulders and carry it back home? Because," he said, "one lost sheep is precious. It's precious, just like all of us. One lost soul would be precious," he said. And so you would call your friends and your neighbors together and you would rejoice. You would just have a party, because you found the one who was lost. It's a love story. It's a love story.

My office has many things that happen in there. It has a lot of machines. These machines are used by Judy and Lynne and other people. There's a postage machine, and then there's also a manual copy machine, and then I also have a bulletin folding machine. The bulletins that you have in your hands today are compliments of the machine in my office. There's an envelope stuffing machine. That office also is where people go and count money. They are in there now, counting. It's also conveniently located so it invites people in, so it's kind of a place to visit. Is there something else in that office? That office of mine also houses the Lost and Found department of the First United Methodist Church. And once a week, someone comes in there looking for their sunglasses or for their

scarve... we have some great scarves in there, you just need to come on in, I'll show you the scarves. Or gloves, or a cell phone, or car keys. And I'm here to tell you, when they find what they're looking for, there is great rejoicing. And it's almost like they want to call their friends and their neighbors and say, "I have found that which was lost."

And Jesus said, "What woman of you..." Ah, now he's talking to the women. "What woman of you, if you had ten silver coins, and if one of them got lost, wouldn't you look for it? Wouldn't you try to find it?" Now, I think you would go into your Search and Rescue mode, and you'd turn that place upside down trying to find that coin. Jesus said you would light a lamp, and you would sweep the floor until you found it, because one silver coin is precious. In Jesus' day, it was one tenth of your savings. It was also one-half of the temple tax, but it also represented one lost soul. And when we find that lost soul, ah, there is great rejoicing. He said, when you find the coin, you would call your neighbors and your friends and say "I found it! I have found it!" It's a love story. It's a love story.

Have you ever felt lost? I'm sure we all have, in our various ways, at various ages, we've all been lost. Couldn't find our direction, couldn't think what to do next. What is tomorrow going to hold, what's life all about? We all get lost. We've got hatred, war, isn't that what those people said in that workshop? Jealousy, betrayal, steroid use, a few vegetables, yeah. We all feel lost once in a while, and it's really kind of hard to love people sometimes. It's hard to reach out to people, because their values are different than ours, they think differently, they feel differently, and it's hard.

It's hard to love ourselves sometimes too. We need a lesson, probably, from Holden Caulfield, you know he was the leading character in J. D. Salinger's book *Catcher in the Rye*. He was kind of a lost soul, but he also could hug himself till his arms turned blue. Well, there's another story. You see, in Luke, there's a story about a shepherd looking for a lost sheep, looking for us. There's also a story about a woman looking for a coin -- us.

But now we have the story that follows it, and it's about a man with two sons. The younger son goes to his dad and says, "I want my share of the inheritance, because I'm going to go off and live in the far country, and I don't know when I'll be back. You can split the inheritance between my older brother and me." So he has his money, and he goes to the far-off country, and he's not there very long until he realizes that his money is leaving him, it's dwindling. He's squandering his life away. He's not making very good decisions, and pretty soon he has no money left, and has to move out of where he's staying. He's hungry, and he goes and finds somebody in that country and says, "You know, I don't have any money, and I don't have a place to live, and I need something. Can you give me a job?" and the man says "Yes. You can feed my pigs."

Now, we used to call that sloppin' the hogs. You can slop the hogs. And so he's out there in the corral and he's got this yucky stuff in his hand, and it's the slop, and he's feeding the pigs, and he's saying, "I'm so hungry I could almost eat this...." and all of a sudden it hits him, "My father back home, his servants are living better than I am. My goodness, they've got a place to live. They have clean clothes to put on, they've got food to eat, and

probably have showers." That might be a stretch... but they're clean. "And look at me." And he makes a major decision in his life. He decides to go home, and that's very difficult, because it's tough to go home with dignity, after you've taken your strong stance in leaving. And he begins to rehearse his speech of repentance.

I kind of wonder sometimes where the mom was in all this. We don't hear about. Mom. We just hear about a dad making this decision, but I suspect he and his spouse, his wife, I bet they sat for many, many hours and talked about what it's like to give that money to that young son and send him off into a place that nobody knew about, didn't know when they would ever see him again. They were scared, and the longer he was away, the more fear they had inside of them, and the more their hearts ached. Much like, I'm sure, Elizabeth Smart's parents must have felt in Utah when she was abducted, and as the months went on and on. Even though you hold out hope, underneath it there's that foreboding, that foreboding fear that we may never see her again.

And so, down the road comes this lonely figure, a disheveled, sickly, dirty, smelly young man, hardly can put one foot in front of the other. And the dad's in the field, and he looks up and he sees him. He says, "He's alive!" and he shouts it back to the house, and the servants come out, his wife came out, and they all were rejoicing, because here he comes down the road, alive. The dad runs up to him and he grabs him and he hugs him and he kisses him, and he says "I'm so glad you're back" and the boy, the young boy says, "Dad, I need to tell you. I want to..." and the dad says, "No, no, not now. Later, later." And he takes him into the house, cleans him up, gives him a fine robe to wear, a ring on his finger, washes his feet, gives him some shoes to help support him in his pain. The meal is on, the celebration has begun.

And in the field nearby is another lonely soul. It's the older brother. And as he becomes aware of what's happened, he goes to the house and he confronts his dad, and he says, "How could you do this? How could you celebrate and have a party and a feast for my younger brother?" And the dad says, "I do not love you any less than your brother. In fact, you and I both know he has made some very bad choices. But your mother and I did not know whether we would ever, ever see him again. We thought he might be dead. And all I would ask of you is if you would come to the house and do your very best to love your brother, to reach out and love him as best you can, because we thought he was dead and he's alive. We thought he was lost, and he is found."

How's the rest of the song go? "Lord, we don't need another mountain, we've got enough mountains and hillsides to climb. We've got enough oceans and rivers to cross, and enough corn fields and wheat fields to grow. We have enough sunbeams and moonbeams to shine. But what the world really needs now is what Paul said to the people in Corinth, what Jesus talked about in all of his stories, what the choir reminded us of. What the world needs now is love, sweet love. But not just for just a few, but for everyone." Amen.