

The Always God – Always Pursuing

Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

This week, I want us to look at how God is: **Still Pursuing.**

CLUEDO Board Game – I wonder how many of you have ever played the Board Game Cluedo. It has 6 characters and

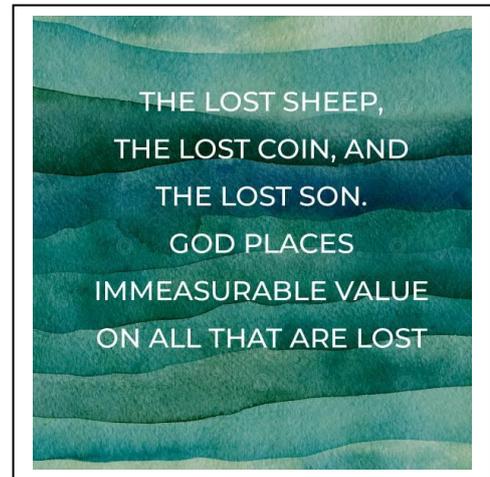
there is a murder in the house. To play this game you have to pay attention; ask the right questions; follow the right leads; take notes; take risks and, as I have experienced when playing – be a little aggressive.

And what I love about this game is not just the mystery behind it, but the fact that the game is NOT over until someone has chased the killer down, named the room in which the murder took place and discovered the weapon that was used.

There's no giving up...no quitting...it's not over until what is pursued is chased down!

It's this kind of bold, aggressive, never-giving up pursuit that we read about and discover in Luke 15. I am sure all of you have searched for that one lost sock that seems to have disappeared in your washing machine. Or your keys, glasses, wallet – maybe your TV remote.

LOST this is a word that conjures up fear, dread and the worst possible scenarios. We only need to witness the frantic families recently of those children who have been lost; their anxiety but also the strong determination of the Emergency workers as they seek to find the one who is lost.



Jesus takes this word “lost” and He applies it to describe those who are not in a relationship with Him...and this word “lost” is defined in its original language as “the state of being ruined.” It means, “utterly destroyed...totally decimated.” God pursues those who are perishing; wasting their lives away; in a state of being ruined and decimated by the enemy.

Throughout the Bible we read of the ongoing story of loss and determination. **Have you ever thought about God in those terms – determination to find the one lost?**

What did God Lose?

He lost the faith of the people, humankind who He had created. He lost them because He gave them free will. God did not want to be worshipped by slaves. If He had He would not have given them free will – the will to choose whether to obey Him or rebel against Him. And what happened – they rebelled.

God had only given them one – **DO NOT**. Do not eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And what happened – they submitted to temptation, ate the fruit, became lost, went astray and wandered in the wilderness.

Did God Weep?

The Bible doesn't tell us but if you love and lose that love – you weep. We know God weeps, because Jesus, as God in human form wept at the tomb of Lazarus.

1 John 4:8 & 16 – but anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. We know how much God loves us and we have put our trust in His love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

These words were written after the choice made by humankind to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They reflected the truth of God's love and the path that He undertook to redeem the lost as John wrote in his Gospel in 3:16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that everyone who believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

That love is the point of the parables in the text for today. To God those who have gone astray are the lost sheep with the first lost sheep being Adam and Eve. The lost sheep are sinners and, yes, the tax collectors were sinners but so were the Pharisees. Their sins were pride and judgment. This was well-illustrated by the parable of the Pharisee who stood upright to pray and compared his piety to that of the publican who hung his head and said, "God, help me, a sinner."

In Philippians we read that Jesus gave up His equality with God, made Himself a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And then He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death – death on a cross.

God could have sent Jesus into the world to be born in a palace. He did not. He sent Him to be born of a peasant girl, in a stable where He lay in a straw-filled manger, far from the silken sheets of a prince's bedroom. As He grew up Jesus lived in a carpenter's house, learning to use tools for making things. He was not raised in a home sheltered from want and need as He might have done if He had been raised in a palace, although, no doubt, sin would have been present even in a small town.

The childhood of Jesus would have brought Him into contact with people like the woman who lost a coin and searched high and low in her peasant's home to find it. It may even have been the case in His own home. The parables of Jesus came from life – the lives of the poor and humble people among whom He lived.

To God, there is no difference between those who are rich and those who are poor. He judges by character and by actions. He does not choose a richly clad person over one who wears rags. All are equal in His eyes.

Look at those who God chose:

He chose Abraham, to be the father of nations.

He chose Moses, a baby left to die on the River Nile but saved and who was raised in richness but fled from it after committing murder, to be the one who led captive Israel to Mt Sinai.

He chose David, a shepherd boy to rule over Israel.

He chose Mary, a peasant girl, to be the mother of Jesus.

Look at who Jesus chose to be His closest companions – fishermen, Peter and Andrew, James, and John. He chose Matthew, a tax collector. He even chose Saul, the persecutor, who would bring the Word to the Gentiles.

God even chose you and me. We all know our stories. Perhaps you were fortunate to have always walked with Jesus, knowing it as you walked. Or perhaps you have only just started walking with Jesus or perhaps you are sitting on the fence – neither rejecting Him but neither accepting Him.

God does not give up on any of us and He will not until the Day of Judgment. He wants us to be with Him. He invites us to be with Him. He

will weep when we are not. They are not the tears of weakness but of sadness.

God is not weak. He is loving and He is stern. He will judge and He will punish. We see that throughout Scripture. He pursues but He does not withhold judgment or punishment. In that He is not being unfair or unjust. God gave us free will. By that free will we can reject God, or we can accept Him. By that free will, we can be saved and have eternal life. By that free will we can be sent to eternal damnation.

What sticks out in our reading today is: **God pursues the lost, but more importantly God pursues the one that is lost.**

The word one is highlighted over and over again in our readings - this is what I call: **The Value of One.**

- You see this value in the searching that takes place...leaving the ninety-nine...turning the house upside down!

You can't read these parables without the value of that which is lost coming off the page...and the clear teaching from Jesus here is that the lost – those outside of a relationship with Him – are of great value to Him! Every one that is lost is of value to Jesus.

This is why He went on the ultimate “search and rescue mission” leaving the confines of heaven and coming to earth and in His own words, states the mission of His life in **Luke 19:10 – “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”**

This is the gospel. This is why Jesus came to earth and lived a perfect life and died for you and me - it was the ultimate way God would show how He pursues us and how valued we are to Him. Don't listen to the

enemy telling you that your life is hopeless, meaningless and that you don't have value. You do matter and have since before you were born.

If you're here this morning and not in a relationship with Jesus...that means you are here this morning and lost. And God brought you here today as a way of pursuing you so you could hear this message of His love and surrender your life to Him.

Give up going your own way, doing your own thing and give up running. I want to encourage those that are lost to run no more. God loves you...the value of one. You!

And what happens once you allow yourself to be found by God? It's a party...a celebration! All of heaven rejoices over one person that is found. And that's what we are going to do today...we're going to have a party over those that were lost but have been found.