

“I Knew You Would Come”

Luke 15:1-10

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor

Smoke Rise Baptist Church

October 14, 2001

In 1989, an earthquake almost flattened Armenia, killing over thirty thousand people in less than four minutes. In the midst of the devastation and chaos, a father left his wife securely at home and rushed to the school where his son was. The school building was in shambles.

Tears filled his eyes as he looked at the debris. He knew he had to try to find his son, though. Years earlier, he had promised his son, “No matter what, I’ll always be there for you.” He went to the portion of the building where he believed his son to be and started digging. Many came and tried to pull him away, thinking his efforts were in vain. He refused to listen or let them distract him.

After over a day of digging, he pulled back a boulder and heard his son’s voice. He screamed his son’s name, “Armand!” He heard a voice in the rubble say, “Dad, it’s me. I told the other kids not to worry. If you were alive you would save me and when you saved me you would save them. Dad, I knew you would come!” That day, fourteen hungry, thirsty, scared kids were saved all because of the valiant efforts of a loving father.

This is the message of the parables in Luke 15:1-10. The parables of the lost sheep and coin powerfully communicate the message of love and hope. Let’s examine them.

These parables were told in response to the criticism Jesus received from the religious leaders who were observing him. They were dismayed at his willingness to associate with sinners. They avoided all contact with sinners and thought surely he would, too.

To the contrary, Jesus sought out sinners and took his message of love and hope directly to them. This offended the religious leaders and led to their stinging criticisms.

A study of these parables reveals two things that I want you to understand today. **First of all, they define what it means to be lost and they tell me that God does not want me to be lost.** Let me explain.

To be lost means to be alone in a dangerous and scary world. To be lost is to be disconnected from a place of security and community as the sheep and the coin were. Spiritually speaking, it means to be separated from God and other believers and on your own.

Do you recall the first time you were alone and scared? I do. I was seven years old and lived on a farm with my parents and three brothers. It seemed that someone was always around until one evening when everybody had gone somewhere. I was alone and I knew it! All of a sudden, the house that had been so warm and cozy was now a haunted house. It made noises and was a hiding place for all kinds of bad guys and ghosts. I was scared.

So, what did I do? I did what any brave seven year old would do. I went and got my BB gun and sat in a chair in the dining room. I prepared myself mentally and physically for my Armageddon.

How thrilled I was to see my parents' car roll into the driveway. I quickly ran to the bedroom and threw my gun in the closet and got out some toys. You would have thought I never knew they were gone when they entered the house.

To be lost means to be alone in a dangerous and scary world. That's not a good feeling at any age, is it?

These parables teach me something else, though. **They reveal that God does not want me to be lost.** He is as distressed over our condition as we are or will be. Like any loving parent, it grieves Him to see us alone and scared.

How do I know this? Look at these parables. What did the shepherd do when he realized one of his sheep had strayed? What did the woman do when one of her coins was missing? Both went on a search and went to great lengths to recover what was lost. Their search was serious and intense.

That is my image of God. He is as determined as the characters in these parables. He, too, will not be satisfied until He has done all He can to find and retrieve His lost children. No one is unimportant or disposable.

As a matter of fact, I think these parables teach us that if I were the only person lost in this world, He would still come searching. In other words, He would have sent Jesus to find me even if everyone else was safely in the fold. That's love! That's God!

I'll tell you another reason I know God does not want me to be lost. He throws a party in heaven every time a lost person has been found and returned home. Both the shepherd and the woman in these parables shared their good news with friends and neighbors so everyone could rejoice. Jesus said the same kind of celebration occurs in heaven when a lost person is connected to the community of faith.

What a contrast this was to the actions and attitude of the Pharisees. No wonder Jesus was a target of their suspicion and jealousy.

At this time in your life, where are you? Are you safely in the fold surrounded by fellow believers and in the presence of a loving Father? Are you alone and scared in a dangerous and frightening world?

I know where God wants us to be and where we need to be. I also know this church is one place where we can come in from the cold and find community and security. I invite you to come. We'll even throw a party for you.