



THE STORY



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Scripture: *The Story* – No Ordinary Man

There have been plenty of times in my life where I have been part of a conversation where I didn't really know what was being said. You know, those times where you just nod politely to keep the conversation moving even though you have no clue what is really being said. Ever been there?

I live in a house with three females. Please pray for me. My 8-year-old daughter will bombard me with conversations about girls fashion and want to know if I like her nails. My 10-year-old daughter will swamp me with chats about games she has downloaded from iTunes and ask if I have watched the latest episode of the Netflix cooking show, "Nailed It". My wife, to whom I have been married 20 years this coming month, will come home from her job telling me all about the fascinating Human Resource policies at her place of work and how she believes if she can only get a better handle on the InMoment responses as she "MOD's" in the "Q line" than that will be better for the business so they can achieve their "maximum seasonal sales targets"...and through all this, I just nod...it's worked so far, I am just going to keep nodding.

There are some conversations I find confusing. As we jump into our subject for today, we are going to take on Chapter 24 of *The Story*, which is actually found in Luke 15, and there are some confusing conversations as part of this chapter. It is, the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, and it is in this chapter we get introduced to one of Jesus' most famous teaching tools- no, not PowerPoint, and not even sermon notes on the Jesus Church app, but one of his most effective methods of teaching, was a little something called, the Parables.

A parable. In a day of text messages, twitter and Instagram, what is a parable? A parable is a story, often fictional, that relays a truth that is timeless. A made-up story, to convey a very real truth.

(Video) No people were actually ate by black bears, there were no casualties, not major casualties, in the production of this parable. But, you'll probably remember the moral, "pick your associates carefully", because the story hopefully hammered the point home. "Be careful who you walk through the forest with!"

Jesus loved to use parables. The parables, had this unique way of making someone think. It wasn't just a statement or a speech that told you what to think, it was a story with intent, that sometimes left you confused, that led you to draw conclusions as to what to believe. Messed with your thinking a little! So powerful.

In Chapter 24 of *The Story*, Jesus begins his ministry in parables. These stories that have hidden meanings, often confusing to those that heard them. And it is clear that Jesus loved a good story, and it is obvious that his sermon delivery of choice was never cookie cutter material. Jesus loved to weave a good tale and draw people in. I think he may have been from Newfoundland.

As we turn through the first few pages of Chapter 24 of *The Story*, we see Jesus "the story-teller" emerge. We first hear the parable of the sower, then there is the parable of the mustard seed, then the parable of lost sheep, then the parable of the lost coin, then the parable of the lost son, then the parable of the Good Samaritan... You don't need a university degree in ancient literature to discern that there is a definite, intentional pattern here! Jesus loved telling these mind-twisting, emotional roller coasters of stories about fictitious people and events that brought the real truth out in a way that made the listener really think. We should tell more stories.

Have you ever felt lost? I remember lots of times in my life feeling lost. Most of the time, being lost is

unintentional, and uncomfortable, it creates feelings of anxiety. A few years ago we were vacationing in Florida, and it was late at night and the GPS wasn't really giving me clear directions (obviously it was the GPS' issue and not mine) Then of course, Yvonne yells at me, "turn here", and without thinking, I turn, and it's a wrong turn, and, we're lost. So, I keep driving, and I discover that we are now at the entrance gate to of all places, Disneyworld. The kids eyes light up with delight and then right in the main entrance gate, I make a massive U turn and head back out the freeway. I then say to the girls, "If anyone ever asks you if your parents took you to Disneyland, you can now say yes..."

Then there's other times, if you're like me, you get lost, and it's on purpose, it's intentional. If you are strongly introverted like me, it's not that you don't enjoy crowds of people, it's just that you need your space a little too... I really love getting lost in crowds of people. Not being recognized by people, just being in a massive crowd and getting lost in the herd. 3 weeks ago, our family chose to get lost on the world's largest cruise-ship.

The Harmony of the Seas, is a massive marine village with over 8,000 people on board. This ship is so big, they don't identify the ship based on separate decks, but they actually have separate neighbourhoods. There is a shopping mall, and a beautiful outdoor Park, called Central Park, where we actually saw a couple who obviously just gotten married getting their wedding pictures taken.

And, the only people, of the 8000 + who knew me, were Yvonne, Bella, and Georgia. And of course, throughout the week, the man who tended to the ice-cream cone machine, he knew me as well. But, this feeling of being lost, not really lost, as in, "I don't know where I am", but just, lost in the throngs of people, and not having any need to have conversations, just feeling like one of the sheep in the ever-moving herd, was an interesting feeling that I often enjoy.

Then, there's the sense of being lost that Jesus builds his parables on, which is a perspective of lostness that is neither leisurely and laughable or an experience to be sought out when we simply feel our personal space has been compromised. The level of lostness that Jesus speaks of here represents

a lostness that detrimentally impacts the human soul in a way that only God really, truly understands.

Jesus spins these parables, these engaging narratives with intense spiritual applications, and we quickly see, or hear, what is important to Jesus. We see the heart of Jesus, through the stories he told. As a response to some Pharisees and Scribes, who were just basically people who loved religion but had no relationship with God, people who hated the fact that Jesus hung with people who didn't fit the mold, normal people like you and me, Jesus wrecks their brains with three back to back parables. Jesus brings the heat with three crazy stories about things that were lost, in different ways.

Jesus tells a story about a sheep, one meager sheep in a flock of a hundred sheep, 1%, strays from the herd. And rather than the shepherd leaving that 1% of the flock to perish, he leaves the 99%, finds it, picks it up, puts it on his shoulders, and brings it home and says, "rejoice, celebrate". Jesus says,

"God looks for people who are outside a relationship with God in the same way. He will spend his time outside the flock to find them."

Then Jesus follows up with a story about a lost coin. A lady loses a valuable coin. Rather than giving up, she initiates a full blown, intense, no holds barred, search and rescue mission until that one coin is found. Then Jesus says,

"God will not stop, he's relentless, until he finds people and brings them into relationship".

Then there's his most famous story, the parable of the lost son, where one son goes away from his father, blows everything, makes a fool of himself and his family, and he comes back and the Father rather than kicking him out, embraces him and celebrates. Jesus says,

"God is like this. No matter how bad you've blown this....lost son, lost daughter come back to God, he'll accept and rejoice with you..."

Three stories, three parables that are apparently about sheep, coins, and sons, but they are not about really about sheep, coins, and sons.

They're about you...they're about me...they're about us...

Three parables of human lostness and divine recovery. Three chapters of an epic saga of human wanderings and divine searching. It's wild if you really track these 3 parables. The Pharisees, the folks just concerned about church rules say to Jesus,

"you can't hang out with or eat with these kinds of people."

Jesus hits them with these three crazy stories about sheep, coins and sons, and says,

"the gospel is not about you, it's a gospel for the outcasts..."

This intense triad of stories takes us on a movement from 100 sheep, to 10 coins, to 2 sons. From sheep, something common and undervalued, to coins, something more expensive and important, to sons, people, the most important commodity in the economy of God. From 1/100 sheep, to 1/10 coins, to 1/2 boys. This movement from common to precious, shows us something. Even though 99/100 are found, the shepherd wants them all. Even though 9/10 coins are found, the lady wants them all. Even though 1/2 boys are found, the father ...wants them all.

If we focus for a moment on Jesus' shortest parable of these three. It's a story all about a lady and a coin that is missing. We don't understand middle-eastern culture so so well. But this is an amazing story Jesus uses it to talk about people, he used it to talk about you, me, us.

This woman, has 10 silver coins. They are of value to her. Obviously. Scholars say each coin was worth one days wage. There's lots of debate as to whether these coins were part of a dowry that was attached to a necklace or a head-dress she wore, but nobody really knows. We won't go there. But it was valuable. And she lost it. No time is wasted in this quick moving story. The story happens so fast you can feel the urgency. She doesn't *wait* to look after lunch. She doesn't *hope* she finds it. She doesn't *pray* about finding it. She doesn't *post on her Facebook* that she lost it. She *immediately initiates* a frantic search/ rescue mission that starts with the lighting of a lamp.

Houses were typically small and they may or may not have had windows. If they did, they were super-small and light would be very limited, if not completely absent. Without the flickering light from this lamp, there would be no glimmer of hope that this coin would be recovered. Once the lamp was lit she just didn't take a casual look under the couch and the beds. She takes the broom, and sweeps and sweeps and sweeps and sweeps. These floors, normally made out of beaten earth or basalt normally had cracks in them, and it was easy for something valuable to *"fall through the cracks..."*

As the lamp was lit and the lady was sweeping, sweeping, sweeping, looking, peering, gazing, searching, in every notch, crook, and crack in that floor, Jesus says she was *"searching carefully"*. It was a meticulous, systematic, passionate, intentional, frantic search, a search that would only stop, once she found what she was looking for. There was no way this coin would be allowed to fall through the cracks. The coin could not recover itself, the coin didn't know it was lost- this lost object, was totally dependent on the one who was looking for it. Of course, once it is found, it is not simply put back in its place and a prayer of thanksgiving is made thanking God for the capacity to recover a lost item. No, no, a neighborhood block party happens with *"the coin"* as the special guest- *"Rejoice with me, I have found, I have found, I have found, the lost coin..."*

Then we find out that the silver coin is not a silver coin at all. The coin is Shane Simms and

*the coin is you, the coin is me, and the coin is us...
"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*

Luke 15, which is really what we are looking at right now, has been called God's *"lost and found department"*. Jesus gives us the crux of his mission, the beat of his heart, in three back to back parables.

Jesus uses a shepherd, a woman, and a father, with some sheep, some coins, and some sons, to say this...

"God will relentlessly seek out those who are not in relationship with Him. He will not stop seeking the lost until they are found."

The mission of God, and the mission of Jesus, is to

“seek and save the lost”.

Just like the woman in the story, God will not let people get lost through the cracks. He is relentlessly searching. The cracks in the floors of life are not so deep and dark that He cannot find people. *That’s where he found me.*

A few months ago, I told the story of God’s relentless pursuit of and search for me, a lost coin. It was called *God on the Harbourfront*. Please check it out on the web if you missed it. It was a story of a young man who didn’t engage his father’s faith, and who went his own way, only to come back to God in a most unusual way. It wasn’t all on my own initiative. Little did I know, that God was lighting the lamp and sweeping the world and looking for me in the cracks of the floor of life. *This is how relentless he is.* Because like the shepherd, like the lady, like the Father, his mission is recovery. Through a crazy series of events, God leads me from an immature, reckless weekend escapade with a bunch of university teenagers to the middle row seat of a Pentecostal church service.

One thing I alluded to in my faith story last time, was there were a few times, when I was really young, that my dad took me to Sunday School. One time, when I was 5 or 6, a Sunday School teacher, Edgar Blake, asked me if I wanted to ask Jesus into my heart. He leaned in and said, *“Shane, do you want to ask Jesus into your heart?”* I really didn’t, but I said that I did, and I can’t ever say that I thought about it anymore after that Sunday School class when I was 6 or 7. Now here I am, in a Pentecostal church 13 years later, in a crisis of life, not understanding why I cannot find peace in life and why I feel like I am being spiritually pursued by something/someone. Why won’t this feeling of being “lost in life”, just leave me alone? *I was a lost coin, that didn’t know that I was lost.*

As I sat through and endured the church service, the preaching eventually began. And it was a moment that changed my life forever. The searching shepherd, the sweeping lady, the loving Father of John 15, must have been converging in heaven on my behalf at once. As the preacher preached, as great of an orator as he was, all I could see was the face of the Sunday School teacher, 13 years before.

As the preacher preached, all I could hear were the words of that Sunday School teacher 13 years before, *“Shane, do you want to ask Jesus into your heart?”* It was like the Shepherd, the Lady, and Father, through the Holy Spirit, were all saying, *“We’ve left everything and searched frantically for you. We didn’t stop. We’ll take you back. It’s time to come home...”* And this time, I did. It was the seeking God, finding the lost coin, persistently looking, searching, seeking, sweeping, and “found me in the cracks”, and it was then, that heaven rejoiced, *“because the coin that was lost, has now been found...”*

Chapter 24 of *The Story*, of which Luke 15 is a part, illustrates the value of a soul. We see the real truth, the gospel truth, through three interesting, gut wrenching, Kingdom driven parables.

Jesus is like a shepherd. No person is not valuable enough that he won’t go looking for them.

Jesus is like the lady. No person is not valuable enough that he will ever stop looking for them.

Jesus is like the father. He will take people back, even and especially when they’ve messed it up.

Of all the things I could have talked about in Chapter 24 of *The Story*, why did I choose this? I chose this, because this is THE Mission. THE Heartbeat. THE passion of God. That those who are lost in this life, lost outside a relationship with him, trying to find meaning everywhere, will come to Him. These parables are important, not just to our theology, not just to our belief about God. But the picture of a searching God is especially poignant, because if that is the character of God, if that is the heart of Jesus, than that ought to be inherent in our heart and character as well.

Our Mission Statement here is this: To inspire, support, and mobilize each other to live like Jesus...” Are we living like Jesus in this area? Do our hearts break for people who are “lost in life” and do they break enough that we actually make it a part of our dailies to pray for people and to be intentional to tell our stories of faith to others. When was the last time you felt a burden for someone, and shared your faith with them? We are offering an elective called “Telling Your Story” to help you do that. But the truth is, we have had to cancel it twice in a row now due to lack of

registration. I am challenging you in this. Christ is challenging you in this. Be more like the Shepherd, be more like the woman, be more like the Father. This is what it means to live like Jesus. The parables of the sheep and the coin focus on the divine initiative and the relentless approach God will take to restore lost people to a relationship with Him. But the last parable, of the Prodigal Son, we see the human response. Sure, the Father may seek, but we need to respond.

If you are here today and you can say in some way you are lost in life and outside what you know is a relationship with Christ, God is seeking you, but you need to respond. He is faithful to find you and he relentlessly wrestles with you and he will not let you fall through the cracks of the floors of life, but you need to come to yourself and respond to Him. I am going to step out in faith in the Holy Spirit and say that some of you today are in that place. This is your moment.

Even though God has 99/100 sheep. He wants all of them. Even though God has 9/10 coins, he wants all of them. Even though God has 1/2 sons, he wants all of them, and he will search, search, search. He has found us all in the cracks of the floor of life. This moment, this family, this table, is symbolic of his finding grace- let's celebrate in it together. This coin, and this table, is about me, its about you, its about us....

As we move into communion, God through Jesus has lit the lamp and swept the floor to find you. He has rescued us through the cracks in the floor of life. As we come, lets be thankful for his searching for us, and let's commit to being the people of Jesus who will search for others. Today, you know God has brought you to this moment. The lamp has been lit and the floor of life has been swept and God has brought you here today. Step out, come to the table, participate in God's grace, and He will meet you in this. And as the parable says,

"today, in heaven, there will be rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one person who is found..."

Points to Ponder

THE STORY ~ No Ordinary Man

Chapter 24

With a friend, your family or in your small group, discuss the following questions.

1. Is there a parable Jesus told that, upon reflection, you can see yourself as a character of? Which one and in what way? Which part of said parable affects you personally?
2. As you reflect on your life, do you remember a time when you simply felt lost?
3. Jesus spins three masterful tales in Luke 15, those of a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. Which of these parables relates to you personally?
4. Jesus said that his core mission was to "seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The three parables previously mentioned are often characterized as "parables of lostness". Do you think Jesus' concept of people being lost is outdated? What do you think he meant by it? In what ways does it apply today?
5. What steps can you take to be more like Jesus who lived on connection with those that were "lost"? Is "living for the lost" a part of your mission?