

**Luke 15:1-32 Narrative Lectionary 072: Prodigal Son**  
**03 Mar. 2013**

“From Lost to Joy”

What I want to do in today’s “sermon” is to ask questions and invite your reflection so that these familiar stories Jesus tells can be heard afresh and speak to you and your life in ways that you need to hear them today. So there will be some periods of silence for reflection today. In the future we may do a church in the round and invite so that we can converse with each other. But not today. The reflections I am going to invite might be too personal to talk about openly.

The three stories Jesus tells today are filled with words of emotion, and they invite us to think both about human relationships and our relationship with God. There are two words upon which I invite your reflection. The first is not an emotional word but a word about a state of being. That word is lost.

What’s it like to lose something? Something you need?

What’s it like to lose something precious? Can you think of a time when you lost something precious?

*Silence for reflection*

Harder question. What’s it like to lose someone precious? Has that ever happened to you?

*Silence for reflection*

A few days later the attacks of 9/11 happened, and following them, the news reports of posters and photos captioned with things like:

“LOST: MY WIFE SUSAN. SHE WORKED ON THE 93RD FLOOR OF TOWER #1”

“HAS ANYONE SEEN MY BROTHER MIGUEL?”

“OUR DADDY IS MISSING!”

What would it be like to find that precious something, that precious someone? Does this help you understand a little bit the shepherd, the woman, the father in our stories?

*Silence for reflection*

An even harder question. What does it mean to be the lost one? What does that feel like? Have there been times in your life when you have been the lost one? Are there ways in which you are now lost?

Is it possible that like the lost, prodigal son you can recognize your own lostness and in that recognition become desperate enough to do what you need to do to find your way home?

*Silence for reflection*

What would it be like to be found again?

Do you think the over-the-top, lavish welcome home the prodigal received changed him in any way? Have you ever had an experience like that?

*Silence for reflection*

Can churches also get lost? Is Living Water lost in any way? What would it take for us to find our way home?

*Silence for reflection*

Second word on which I invite your reflection. It's an emotional word. Here are the emotional words and phrases in today's stories: grumbling 'Rejoice with me, more joy in heaven 'Rejoice with me, joy compassion; found!' celebrate. His father came out and began to plead with him. rejoice, was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."

We call these stories the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost sons. But the overwhelming emotion in these stories is joy. Everyone in these stories rejoices, except the elder brother. So these are parables of joy. Does that help you face your own lostness?

*Silence for reflection*

Two things in these stories should not be overlooked. One is the party. It was the music and dancing that offended the older son. Of course, let the younger son return home. But where does it say that such provisions include a banquet with music and dancing? Except that this is the loving father's way. This story is more about joy than it is about lostness.

The second element often overlooked is that the father not only had two sons but loved two sons, went out to two sons, and was generous to two sons. That is your heavenly father's way. That is your heavenly father's attitude toward you. Do you hear your heavenly father calling?