**20250914 Luke 15. 1-10 Heaven is watching**

Some years ago, another mum friend share an incident when her daughter got lost in Walt Disney World in Florida.

Her daughter, aged about 2, was in the buggy, and whilst the family were walking, with the other kids in tow too, at some point, her toddler had gotten out of the buggy to wander off. It wasn’t until some time later that Mum realised the buggy was empty. Her daughter was gone and she had no idea of when she’d escaped the buggy.

Frantically, she ran into a shop to alert a member of staff. Her daughter had been found and was sleeping in the nursery, completely unaware of the panic caused.

This incident happened just a couple of years after 9/11. The relevance of this, the staff assured her, there were plain closed security staff wandering around the parks, hidden in plain sight. They even joked, they thought there was more security than visitors. So don’t worry, we’ll find her.

Even remembering this, makes me feel frantic.

Jesus shares 2 parables of losing valuable things in today’s gospel.

There is the sheep who wanders off, goes their own way and gets lost, and the man who leaves all the other sheep to search for just that one. That one in a hundred.

And the next, a woman who loses a precious coin, a tenth of her silver pieces. She holds up the light, sweeps the entire house, high and low and doesn’t stop until she finds it.

I love the fact that Jesus tells two parables here, one with a male lead and one with a female.

The initial setting for this has the sinners and tax-collectors listening to Jesus and the Pharisees and Scribes grumbling.

Who do you most align with, I wonder?

The religious leaders and teachers resented the fact that Jesus chose to spend time and invest himself with those on the edges, those society didn’t like very much, they make mistakes, they’ve ended up on a very different path than is acceptable, yet it’s these people who come to *find* Jesus, to listen to him. In contrast, Jesus teaches that we are *all* worth searching for. God longs to spend time with us, whoever we are.

Sometimes we hide ourselves from God.

Sometimes we are not easy to find.

Sometimes we pretend we’re not lost at all.

Sometimes, a lot of the time, we think we do not need God. [[1]](#footnote-1)

But God doesn’t give up. The next parable in this chapter is the prodigal son, another story of being someone being lost, having gone their own way and made a mess of it.

And again, God is the one who is searching and does not give up on any of us. Like the shepherd searching for his sheep or the woman turning her house upside down to search for her coin, precious, valuable things are not just discarded or forgotten about, they are hunted down!

We lose our way, sometimes we may not even realise that’s what is happening until we look back and realise how lost we’ve become. God actively comes to find us because of his solid, lasting, unrelenting love for each one of us.

We are found through Jesus who on the cross draws everyone to himself because we are utterly precious to him and deeply loved. Any one of us would be missed if we weren’t there. Our shepherd wasn’t content with having 99 sheep safely in the flock….doesn’t matter that one went astray. All of us are worth dying for, Jesus’ sacrificial love breaks through the power of death and leads Jesus first and then to each of us to new life.

The shepherd carries the lost sheep on his shoulders, this is God, imagine the care, this intimate picture of love and compassion. This isn’t an angry parent yanking the lost child by the hand saying in their anger ‘I told you not to go wandering off’.

Carried on the shepherd’s shoulders the sheep is lifted high and now has a great vantage point and can see what is straight ahead. She knows when home is on the horizon.

And home? What’s going on there?

Celebrating and rejoicing! There is misery in being lost and rejoicing in being found. Jesus says, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

What does this say about heaven?

The theologian Paula Gooder explains that the biblical writers, from genesis to revelation, write about heaven and its relationship with earth. Although not everyone agrees what heaven is like, belief in heaven is widespread, some place or location of the afterlife that even the briefest of searches will throw up plentiful examples of its usage in films, novels and songs. She explains heaven as God’s realm, where God resides, it is everything about God and what he is like. [[2]](#footnote-2)

Jesus tells the crowd, the angels are celebrating, there is joy! The angels in heaven are watching us, eagerly, aware of what our challenges are, our distractions, our miserable, life-draining addictions are. If any of you are familiar with the American artist Brian Kershisnik[[3]](#footnote-3), many of his paintings have amassed heavenly host within a breath of the earthly figures.

In Celtic spirituality, people will speak if ‘thin places’ where heaven feels closer to earth than elsewhere, a place where God’s presence is more vibrant and we find ourselves in the sacred. [[4]](#footnote-4)

This closeness of the shepherd who will lift us on his shoulders, to carry us home, do I feel secure with this? Or do I still want to stubbornly determine my own path?

It’s usually when life is tough that I realise I need the shepherd to pick me up, that I’ve gotten myself lost again, and to accept that I need to be found.

When we’re tired, fragile and broken, when we’ve gone our own way, when we’ve forgotten to trust and hope has run dry[[5]](#footnote-5), the shepherd is striding towards us, to lift us his high on his shoulders whilst the heavenly host delight, laugh and sing.

Heaven is watching. They are ready to party.

The question is, do I celebrate this way too?

1. The Canterbury’s Preacher’s Companion 2025, Catherine Williams, p.225 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Heaven, Paula Gooder, p.10, [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.kershisnik.com/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Heaven, Paula Gooder, p.102 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Canterbury’s Preacher’s Companion 2025, Catherine Williams, p.226 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)