

## DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT:

### **READ LUKE 15:1-31**

Yesterday I found a pound of hamburger in the freezer. So what, you may say. You would have thought I'd found a pot of gold if you'd seen the smile spread across my face and the little dance I did out there in the garage all by myself. Like you, I imagine, we're trying to limit trips to the grocery store for safety's sake, so I'm trying to be creative with what I have on hand and to cook nutritious meals. Now don't think we don't have any food because we do. It's just been a couple of weeks since we've had anything with hamburger, and even when we've gone to the store, there has been none to be found.

I thought I had some hamburger in the freezer, but I did not find any when I did a thorough search two weeks ago—twice. I had been busy all morning yesterday, and had limited time to cook. Jeffery is still working so I try to have a hot meal waiting for him when he comes home with enough left for him to take for lunch the next day. When my thoughts turned to supper, I decided I'd have to go plow through the freezer for something that might be quick and easy. When I reached in to grab a random freezer bag, I could hardly believe my eyes when the label said it contained “hamburger.”

Just after my silly celebration over finding this treasure, I immediately thought of the woman who had lost her coin, and this devotional message was born. In chapter 15 of his Gospel, Luke tells us three stories of loss and restoration. There's the shepherd who leaves 99 of his 100 sheep to find the one who has managed to wander away from the fold. Then, there's the aforementioned woman who somehow lost one of her ten coins. It obviously was of great value to her, although the amount is not specified. And then, of course, there's the an apparently ungrateful son who requests that his father give him his inheritance even before his father has died—a true insult in that day and time—to take the money and squander it away. The true pathos of this story is seen in the father's continued concern and yearning for his son even while he is lost.

In each case, the “owner” of the lost item keeps looking until the lost item—the sheep, the coin, the son—is found. As you are probably aware, there's enough material in these three stories to fill volumes. I will stick to one point. This one message has stuck with me since seminary. My awesome, New Testament Professor, Dr. Loyd Melton, drove home a crucial message of these parables. In each case, the reaction of the person who “sought and found” was way out of proportion to the degree of the loss. The shepherd, after all, had 99 other sheep. The woman still had nine coins. The father didn't have to throw out all the stops and give the celebration of the decade to welcome his recalcitrant son back home. But each of the “finders” did celebrate, they did go to great lengths, they did rejoice heartily when they found what they were looking for. In each case, the one who is searching represents God, and we are the lost ones God is seeking. Surely God has plenty of other people. Why would he seek you? Why would he seek me? Because he love us beyond comprehension. Isn't that awesome?

God has been called the “Hound of Heaven” from the poem of the nineteenth century poet, Francis Thomson. In this lengthy poem, Thomson presents a sinner hunted by God who is relentless in

pursuit. God relentlessly pursues us. This is God as Luke has shown us, and Luke goes on to record Jesus' words to Zacchaeus in chapter 19, verse 10, *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.* (NIV) Now, if God will go to all this trouble to find us when we're lost, does that not demonstrate how much God values us? And if God loves us and values us that much, does that not mean God loves us, cares for us, and will not abandon us? Knowing this is true should give great comfort to us in this time when some may be feeling a bit lost as we try to adapt in the COVID-19 world.

While the Scriptures have a lot to say about God's seeking us, we also have a responsibility to respond. For example, God told the children of Israel (Jacob) as God was preparing them to enter Canaan, . . .*[I]f . . . you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.* (Deuteronomy 4:29, NIV), and Isaiah told the people of Israel, *Seek the Lord while he may be found.* (Isaiah 55:6, NIV). (By the way, both of these verses showed up in my morning devotional and Scripture reading. This is a sure sign to me of God's providence as God already knew I was going to be looking to the Scripture for support for this devotional.) God seeks us first, then we can seek God.

Please think about these two things

1. We can be lost in many ways such as geographically not knowing where we are; cognitively or emotionally not knowing how to handle a specific situation; or, spiritually, by being out of relationship with God. In all these cases, God is with you. In the last case, God is seeking a relationship with YOU. There's no better time than now to say, "Yes."
2. We wouldn't even know to look for God if God had not revealed Godself to us. God took the initiative. God loved us from the beginning and made Godself known to us so we would know to start looking. God loves you all out of proportion. God is loving you through these hard times, so keep on looking to God for your salvation.

Pray for each other.

I'm praying for you,

Pastor Sandy