

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



November 13, 2016

Lost and Found

The grand narrative of the Bible is one of God seeking to rescue a humanity lost in a maze of its own making. The possibility of such a rescue should encourage each one of us to cooperate.

"Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost! . . . Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!" (Lk. 15:6, 9).



Several years ago Melissa and I flew to Lake Tahoe for a long weekend getaway. After getting on the plane in Wichita, I realized that my cellphone was missing. It must have fallen out somewhere in the airport. There was nothing we could do until we returned. Upon arriving back in Wichita, our first stop was the lost-and-found desk at the airport. The lady opened a drawer to reveal a large pile of lost cell phones—with my phone sitting on top.

I was ecstatic to get my phone back. But it's a scenario that is played out countless times throughout our lives with all kinds of things that we consider valuable. In Luke 15, Jesus uses several stories that play on this theme of something being lost then found: the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. A quick scan through these three parables reveals some important lessons for our edification.

In the first two parables, the lost objects are incapable of making their way back to their owners. The owners must take the initiative to mount a search to find them. In both cases, the lost items (a sheep and a coin) are considered too valuable to lose. The owners consider the time and trouble spent in looking for them to be worth it. The simple lesson here is God's love for fallen humanity. He has gone to great trouble to seek and save the creatures He loves.

In the third parable, the "lost" item—a wayward son—knows where home is, but deliberately chooses to run away, against his father's wishes. The father does not forcibly drag him back. Though it breaks his heart, he honors his son's freedom to make his own decisions. So he patiently waits (and prays!) for his son to come to his senses and return home of his own will. Eventually his hope is rewarded. The son stumbles home, chastened and humbled, and a grand reunion takes place. This human version of the lost-and-found theme highlights the role that the lost individual plays in coming back to God. God

will not coerce anyone to come to Him without that person's personal desire to do so. But once that decision is made, oh, what an outpouring of undeserved grace awaits him!

There are other details in these stories that we could dig into, but let's limit our attention to one overarching theme here: The story of humanity is an epic tale of creatures lost in their own arrogance, and the Creator's tireless fight to reclaim them. Every one of these fallen creatures—including me!—are precious in His sight, and He will expend every effort to restore the relationship that was destroyed, consistent with our free will. Ever since God called out to Adam in Eden, "Where are you?", He has pursued this agenda with tireless determination. He will not force His love upon us; but if we acknowledge our fallenness and return to Him, He is quick to forgive and reconcile.

These little stories should force each one of us to wrestle with two questions: Who am I to dismiss anyone as unworthy of my time and attention? And who am I to dismiss *myself* as worthless?

— David King