

An orange envelope with the words "Open Invitation" printed in a white, serif font. The envelope is placed on a dark blue folder. A black fountain pen lies diagonally across the folder to the right of the envelope. The entire scene is set against a light-colored, textured background.

Open Invitation

Lost and Found

<sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home.

Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'<sup>7</sup> I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

<sup>8</sup> "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' <sup>10</sup> In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Jesus is speaking to a divided audience.



If our religiousness leads us to judge people more than love them, we're no longer listening to Jesus.



## The Lost Sheep





## The Lost Sheep



The word of the Lord came to me: <sup>2</sup> "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?

<sup>3</sup> You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. <sup>4</sup> You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. <sup>5</sup> So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals...

<sup>7</sup> "Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: <sup>8</sup> As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, <sup>9</sup> therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord:

<sup>10</sup> This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them. <sup>11</sup> “For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.

<sup>12</sup> As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered... I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. <sup>16</sup> I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak... I will shepherd the flock with justice.

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There is more heavenly joy over *repentance* than over *obedience*.





## The Lost Coin



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The woman “searches  
carefully” to find the coin.



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## How do the lost things get lost?



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Being welcomed by Jesus includes an invitation to repentance that requires a response.



Both parables, in the Greek, are long, run-on questions that culminate not with the lost thing being found, but with the joyful celebration.

“In the stories of the sheep and the coin, the punch line in each case depends on the Jewish belief that the two halves of God’s creation—heaven and earth—were meant to fit together and be in harmony with each other. If you discover what’s going on in heaven, you’ll discover how things were meant to be on earth. That, after all, is the point of praying that God’s kingdom will come ‘on earth as in heaven.’” (N.T. Wright)

One of the clear takeaways from these two parables is a God who doesn't sit and wait for the lost to find him...

a God who is seeking and searching...

intensely, methodically, diligently, deliberately, and with unwavering passion.

"Those strong Feet that followed  
after... with unhurrying chase, and  
unperturbed pace... deliberate speed,  
majestic instancy..."



“As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and unperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace. And though in sin away from God it seeks to hide itself, Divine grace follows after, unwearingly follows ever after, in that never ending pursuit.” (J.F.X. O’Conor)



If we assume God is actively seeking and pursuing the lost, how does that affect our day-to-day interactions with people?

How many of the “wrong” kind of people do you have in your life? Is your religiosity causing you to see through a lens of judgment instead of love?

Do you remember a time when you met the invitation of Jesus to repent with a response? If so, be thankful! If not, why not?



Invite the Spirit to give you a hunger to see the “joys of heaven” embodied on earth as God draws people back into relationship with Himself.

Ask God to lay on your heart the name of one person you can pray for this year who needs to be “caught” by the Hound of Heaven.

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