



# Ravensworth

## BAPTIST CHURCH

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**September 11, 2022 | Ordinary Time**

**Luke 15:1-10**

***Storytelling 101: You Matter***

**Rev. Dr. Leah Grundset Davis, preaching**

When I was about 12 years old, my mom lost a ring that she wore every day. She loved that ring and she was not a person attached to material goods. I remember she woke up that morning and realized it was gone and the entire house went into upheaval, literally and figuratively.

We turned rooms upside down, pulled out couch cushions, looked in the washing machine and the freshly washed clothes that my sister and I had yet to put away. My dad looked in the pipes in case it had gone down any of the sinks. She knew she had it the day before so it HAD to be somewhere in the house. I had the job of looking through the trash can, the morning after we had eaten shrimp for dinner so it's honestly a miracle that I like shrimp to this day.

Around lunchtime, we all finally sat down and I saw my mom's lip quiver a bit. She was so sad that she had lost this ring and it was seemingly lost. As she sat down on the couch, she spread her hands out on her knees as she sat down and that's when we all saw it...her ring was on her opposite hand!!! It had been on her all along, and somehow in the middle of the night she had taken it off her right hand and moved it to her left hand.

We laughed and laughed. She cried in relief. And then we all realized we had a big mess to clean up! We never let her forget this moment either.

As a child, I couldn't imagine how she wouldn't know her ring was on her other hand. But the other day, I was talking on my phone while frantically looking for my phone, so I understand now. I see you, 40.

But on that day with my mom, I saw relief wash over her like I never had before. This ring had been found, a part of her found because this ring mattered to her, and the fear of the possible grief steadied because she held the solution, literally and figuratively!

We kicked off Bible Study again last Tuesday and had a fantastic discussion about our passage for this week and the passage for next week. We only read a small part of the story this morning and it continues with the parable we call the parable of the prodigal son next week. It's all about being lost and being found and what we value.

Jesus' storytelling takes us on a journey of others, items, and family relationships in just a few verses! You enter this chapter thinking, Jesus is the best—of course he sees the value in the one lost sheep and one lost coin, what a great storyteller, what a guy! We are along for the ride. But then, he finishes his story with the story of family tension, a celebrated son and one who feels overlooked, a father who needs some self-examination and a conversation about repentance. He gets us to buy into the idea of searching for what is lost and its value and then turns it around and makes us examine ourselves.

Gosh, he was good.

Our parables we did read this morning, in the first part of the chapter take us on the first 2/3 of our journey. One sheep out of 99 is lost. The good shepherd goes to find it because he couldn't bear the thought of the sheep lost to the wilderness. And as Jesus says, "even when one sinner repents, there is joy in heaven."

Then Jesus tells the parable of the lost coin—a woman has lost her one coin, and while she still has 9, that one has great value. She needs to keep looking for it until she finds it because it matters and then she celebrated with her friends! And Jesus said, "Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

A word about Jesus' comments of repentance. In Luke, this kind of repentance is about a return to community, a return to wholeness and fullness of a person, not a moral kind of repentance that we associate with the idea of someone repenting. When one person finds wholeness and joy, the heavens rejoice! This person has found wholeness---the have recognized they matter, they have found that part of the story where they are most alive and whole! It is a celebration!

As Dr. Amy-Jill Levine writes, "In this context, sinners are individuals who have removed themselves from the common welfare, who look to themselves rather than to the community. They were always welcome in the synagogue, in the worship space, the return to community was always there."<sup>[1]</sup>

And in these two parables, there is feasting and rejoicing over a lost sheep, a lost coin in community.

Remember how I said last week that parables are a gift because they don't actually give one way to interpret them? There are so many options. My guess is we might have different interpretations of these parables right in this moment or at different times in our lives. I think Jesus knew about human

nature and storytelling and that might have just been his intention with choosing parables as his main storytelling technique. I think it was a gift to all of us.

What I do see here across these two parables today, is attention to finding what is of value for all of us—as individuals, as community. And looking and searching for it, and rejoicing once we've figure it out.

We've been looking and searching and piecing ourselves together this fall at RBC, literally and figuratively. We're weaving our stories and lives back together after a summer sabbath where many traveled for the first time in three years and where some of us have had to step back for intentional sabbath.

We gather again this fall with faith formation offerings for our kids, our youth, and our adults that are bound to fit wherever you might find yourselves. That is a celebration!

We are being brought back into community, into wholeness this fall. I'm not saying we needed to repent from our summer travel ways however! Only drawing a connection to the idea of a return to community and the goodness it brings to be meeting in our small groups again, while we get to share about our summer stories and the ways we felt sabbath.

This morning, right after worship, I hope you'll join us for a Congregational Conversation right here in the sanctuary and via zoom. We've had a few years of loss and grief on a worldwide scale, and I wonder what we might be looking and searching for here at RBC. We need a chance to share those stories, so we don't hang out with needless worry and anxiety for too long before we are once again found in the welcome of this community.

Some of us might have questions about new COVID protocols, about our fall plans and might feel like something that they hold great value in, is getting lost along the way. Our work in community is to keep looking and searching together, so that our community is whole and each person knows the value of their voice, their search, and their story.

You matter. You matter to this place, your voice and presence is critical to our life together. Your story matters. And you matter to God you Creator, Jesus your Friend, and Holy Spirit your Comforter.

Let's search, find, and celebrate together for what is next in the story of Ravensworth Baptist Church. May it be so. Amen.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Amy-Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus*. 36.