



**September 14, 2025**

~ Luke 15:1-10 ~

## **Rev. Aneeta Devi Saroop (she/her)**

**Assistant to the Bishop for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

**British Columbia Synod**

Spirit of Life Lutheran Church, Vancouver B.C. on the ancestral, unceded territory of the Coast Salish People Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations.

### ***The Parable of the Lost Sheep***

*Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”*

*So he told them this parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

### ***The Parable of the Lost Coin***

*“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

~

Grace and peace to you from God our Source and Christ our Companion. Amen.

Luke tells us that the Pharisees were grumbling because Jesus was eating with “sinners and tax collectors.” That word *grumbling*, we know the tone. The whisper behind the back, the disapproving side-eye, the judgemental “tsk-tsk” about who belongs and who doesn’t.

And Jesus responds not with an argument, but with a story. Two of them, in fact. A shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to find the one that is lost. A woman turns her house upside down to find a single lost coin. These are images of a God who notices what’s missing, who doesn’t shrug and say, “*Oh well, ninety-nine out of a hundred isn’t bad.*”

This is not a God of acceptable averages. This is a God who refuses to let even one life slip through the cracks.

When I hear these parables, I’m struck by how relational they are. A sheep may seem small, but for a shepherd, that sheep has a name, a personality, a story. A coin may seem trivial, but in the life of that woman, it was survival. It was bread for the day, security for her household.

Jesus is teaching us that God’s love is not abstract. It’s not about numbers on a page or categories of “good” and “bad.” God’s love is personal, particular, concrete. You matter. Your story matters. Your struggles, your gifts, your questions, all of it is seen and held by God.

And if you feel like you’ve slipped away, if you feel forgotten, ignored, misunderstood or lost, God is the one searching the hillsides and sweeping the floors until you are found.

This is not only about God’s love for each of us individually, but also about the way we, as church, are called to reflect that love in our cities and neighbourhoods among those who feel as though they are lost. Too often, we become like the Pharisees in this passage, grumbling about who belongs, who doesn’t quite fit, who “should” be here, and who isn’t.

But Jesus calls us to a different posture. The church isn’t a gated community for the already righteous. It’s a search party. We are sent to notice who is missing, to listen for the voices on the margins, to ask: *Whose story isn’t at the table shaping our own story as God’s story? Whose song is not yet heard among us?*

In the ELCIC, across our congregations, we know what it’s like to feel small. We have always been a church at the margins. We are not the largest church in Canada. But perhaps that’s a gift. Because when you’re small, you notice. You notice when someone isn’t there. You notice the ache of absence. And that noticing becomes an invitation to go looking, not out of shame, or guilt, or numbers, but out of a deep and abiding love that God has shown us. Where could we find God, enlivened?

Both parables end not with guilt, but with joy. The shepherd throws a party. The woman calls her neighbours to celebrate. Heaven rejoices, Jesus says, not over those who never got lost, but over the one who was found.

That's the heart of the gospel: joy. Not shame. Not finger-pointing. Joy.

Imagine if our congregations were known for that? Churches where joy erupts every time someone shows up, every time someone finds belonging, every time someone feels seen. Every time gifts are shared, and the gathered people are claimed and nourished in Word and Sacrament, joy is contagious. It's the Spirit's way of saying, *"This is what God's reign looks like, like everyone gathered in, no one left behind."*

Beloved in Christ, God is searching for you, for me, for all who feel lost. And God calls us to join the search, to rejoice when even one is gathered in.

So let us go from this place not grumbling about who belongs, but rejoicing in the relentless, searching love of God. For Christ has already gone ahead of us, seeking, saving, and celebrating.

Thanks be to God. **Amen.**