

How Can I be Significant when I Feel so Lost?

Created for Significance series

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Have you ever been lost? Yes? Some people. I have a friend that is directionally challenged. And there's lots of ways we can get lost, right?

- Maybe as a child we get lost from our parents in the store, right? And I always wondered who panics more, the parent or the child? Parents.
- We can get lost if we go on a hike, right? Go on a hike, you lose the trail, you get lost. Sometimes we find our way back. Sometimes we don't. We have to call out search-and-rescue to find us. I don't you guys remember some years back, maybe five years ago or so, Pathfinder Club got lost up in the local mountains. Had to call out search and rescue to find them. A little embarrassing, right, to be the Pathfinders and get lost. But that can happen.
- Sometimes we get lost when we're driving. And maybe not so much anymore because we all have a little pocket computer that we can bring up Google Maps and figure out where we are. But one of the YouTube channels I follow, Casey LaDelle, he's a tow truck driver, lives in rural Oregon. And there's a lot of forest out there that has dirt roads in it, and he gets called to pull people out that get stuck out there. And especially in the wintertime because they don't plow the dirt roads in the wintertime. There's big signs, you know, this road's not maintained in the winter, snowmobiles only. And it's amazing to me the number of people that will drive right past like a 5'x5' sign saying don't go down this road in the wintertime, snowmobiles only. But Google Maps told me to and they will drive off of a nice plowed highway into a non-plowed road. And some of

them get impressively a long ways down the road before they get stuck and they have to call and get help.

We have lots of ways of getting lost. And when you're lost, do you feel significant? No. You can have a lot of feelings. You might feel frustrated. You might be angry. You might be scared. You might be sad. Just a whole host of feelings you can have, but none of them are good. None of them are positive. None of them are like, 'Oh yeah, I'm so happy I'm lost. This is great.' That doesn't happen.

And we're in our second week of our series, "Created for Significance," and we're going to be talking about the parables of the lost that Jesus told, and we kind of wonder, you know, what does that have to do with being significant? I'm glad you asked. We're going to talk about that. Okay?

And some of you may be thinking, 'Hey, I know these stories, Bill. I've heard these stories before. Now, let me go check out on my pocket computer and see what's happening on Instagram.' Hang with us because we're going to look at some of these a little bit differently today. Hopefully, learn something new.

So open your Bibles with me to Luke chapter 15. These are the parables of the lost. What gets lost in these parables? The sheep, the coin, and the son, the prodigal son. Now, this week we're only covering the sheep and the coin. Next week, Pastor's boss is going to be here. So on your best behavior, everybody next week. Pastor's boss is gonna be here. He's going to preach. He's going to cover the last one. I got to thinking about that. We've got like a two-part series on being lost in the middle of a series of significance. That's like sermon inception, man. A few people that seen the movie got it. All right. Okay, here we go.

So we've got three parables of the lost, right? The lost coin, the lost sheep, the lost son. All right? And we're going to learn something new here today, I hope. Now let's dive in and look at these. I want you to pay attention to the first three verses because these are going to be wildly important later

on. And a lot of times we just gloss over this because we hear this so much in the Gospels.

Everybody there? Luke 15, verse 1. Now the tax collectors and the sinners were all gathered around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.' Doesn't it seem like we hear that all the time in the New Testament? Then Jesus told them this parable.

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? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and he goes home. And then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me, I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over the 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent.

How many of you have heard this story before? Like almost 100%. We know this story, right? We love this story. We sang the song this morning, right? 'Reckless Love.' God's coming to get us and save us. And this is not reckless the way we often think of reckless like doing something that endangers our safety or endangers others. This is reckless because God offers His love with no guarantee He's going to get it back.

Think about when you begin dating somebody and it's early in the relationship. You know, like date number two. Do you tell the other person, 'I love you'? Anybody? One person raised their hand. Most of us don't do that. Why? Not ready. We want to make good and well sure that the other person is going to say it back. Right? I'm gonna wait a little bit until I'm really sure. See, we want to be sure. God's love is reckless because God offers His love to everybody. He's not worried about, is it going to come back to me or not? Alright, so we hear this story, we know it.

And the shepherd notices that he has his sheep missing, and he leaves the ninety-nine, and he goes looking. And where does he leave the 99? In the

open country. Now I would swear that when I was a kid growing up, maybe in one of the Bible books or in our Sabbath school lessons or something, there's a picture of the shepherd standing next to the pen counting the sheep as they go in. And oh, I've got 99, and he locks the gate and he keeps these sheep safe. Some of you are shaking your heads. You've seen this picture, right? It doesn't say that. Where does he leave the sheep? In the open field. Like, 'Hey, y'all take care of each other. Peace out. I'll be back.' And he's gone. Who's taking care of the sheep? Nobody. Wow.

Hey, now you've got to remember, parables are fictional stories. Okay? It's meant to make a point, alright? So we can't look at it too closely. Alright, here we go. But He leaves the sheep in the open field, and He goes out and He finds the other sheep, and you're saying, I know, I got it, the shepherd equals Jesus and the lost sheep equals us. Heard it, been there, got it. Right?

See, this is supposed to make us feel significant. And it does. Right? God left 99 other sheep in the open country on their own to come find us, right? And we love the words of the song 'Reckless Love.' There's no wall you won't kick down. There's no lie you won't tear down coming after me. There's no shadow you won't light up, mountain you won't climb up coming after me. And we love that. And that kind of is the same as what Isaiah 45.2 says. I didn't put this in your notes. You might want to write that down. Isaiah 45.2 says, 'I will go before you and level mountains. I will break into pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron.' What's gonna hold God back? Nothing, right? And that's amazing because God is doing amazing things to help us be saved. I mean, He's already given His life. Well, what else do you want from Him?

Now, some of us, we've got to have a little word of warning here because there is a point at when God stops coming after you. If you say, no, long enough, no God, leave me alone, no God, stop, leave me alone. What's God gonna do? Leave you alone. Respect your wishes. And all of us here say, yeah, but we didn't do that. See, we're all here in church. We didn't do that.

We're good. Except we do that sometimes, right? Because if we take our whole sum of our life and we say, God, here, you can have all my life, here it is, the whole thing, except I need this little piece. You can have 98%, but I need this. This is for me. Right? We do that.

Imagine that you're that young couple again, and you've both said, 'I love you,' and now you're thinking about getting married. And you tell your significant other, 'You know, I used to date lots of people, but I don't anymore. I quit dating all of them just for you.' And she says, 'Really? You stopped dating all of them?' 'Yeah, all of them except one. There's one over there. But you're number one. She's like 800. But I still need her, but you know, you've got everything else.' Any women here going to sign up for that? No. I've never met a woman who would sign up for that, right? Want it all. Don't want 98%. Want it all. God wants it all. Don't hold anything back from Him. Okay? Alright.

Next parable. Luke 15. Oh, this is the important part. God wants me! and don't write me, write your name. Right? God wants Alberto. God wants Israel. God wants Tomas. God wants Debbie. God wants Sergio. Right? God wants Marissa. God wants us, all of us. Okay? And that makes, that gives us significance. Okay.

The next parable, verse 8. 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? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me, I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Now, when I think of a coin, I always default to a quarter. I don't know why. Too much time in arcades growing up. I don't know. But I just think of a quarter. And I've reached a point in my life that if I lose a quarter, that doesn't bring me to financial ruin. I can withstand losing a quarter and probably most of us here could withstand that financial loss. And so we kind of lose this here because for us coins aren't worth a whole lot. Right?

But in my Bible there's a little footnote next to that that says that silver coin was worth ten drachma. I hope I'm saying that right. But 10 drachma was worth about a day's wage. Now, if you lost how much money you make in a day, pre-taxes, would you go searching for it? I would, right? I mean, that's eight, nine hours worth of work. In the first century, that was probably 12 hours worth of work. That's significant. So she lights up her cell phone flashlight and begins searching, right? Under the table, under the bed, under the firewood pile, looking for this coin. And when she finds it, there's a celebration. It's a significant amount of money.

And when we look at this story, it seems the same as the first. You know, the woman is Jesus and we're the coin. But there's some differences. Let's talk about what gets lost here. We have the coin, the sheep, and the son. Does the coin know that it's lost? No. Did the coin get lost on purpose? No. What about the sheep? Does the sheep know that it's lost? Sheep aren't so bright, but probably at some level, right? 'Hey, there's no other sheep around, and where's that silly human that always hangs around', right? Something's not right. Did the sheep get lost on purpose? No. It No, it just happened. Now what about the Son? He gets lost on purpose, right? Doesn't that represent us, those three states, so well? There's some of us who don't know we're lost. Maybe we never grew up in a family where they talked about God in any positive way. Sure, if you live here in the Americas, you've heard of Jesus and God, but maybe you only heard of Him referred to as, you know, only stupid people believe in that fairy tale. Right? And you've never heard the Gospel story from somebody that understands it and can explain it. You've always heard it as something that is ridiculed. And your lost and you don't even know it.

Some people are like the sheep. We didn't mean to get lost. We know that there's a shepherd and a flock that we're supposed to be a part of, but somehow we're not there anymore. And can we get back on our own? No. We need somebody to come get us. Because somehow we ended up somewhere, and we don't know the way back.

Now the Son, He knows the way back. And God has a different way of dealing with that story. And we'll talk about that next week. But we see these three different situations, and God deals with them differently and has a different way of dealing with them because you are significant because God says you are. Sometimes we have a time in our life where we feel kind of beat up by life. Maybe a relationship's not going well, or a job's not going well, or family's being a pain in the neck, or there's medical issues. Whatever's happening, we're getting beat up by life. You feel like it doesn't matter anymore. Au contraire. You are significant because God says you are.

And it's great to have people in our lives that lift us up and help us be positive and help keep moving us forward and help making us feel significant. But even if you don't have that, you are still significant because God says you are. And who cares what some temporal being on this planet says? They can't compare to what God says.

Now, some of you have been saying, Bill, you said we were going to learn something new. I haven't heard it yet. Alright, here we go. When Jesus was here on our planet, first century, He came to die for our sins, right? Be our Savior. What else was Jesus besides that? He was our example, right? He's our teacher. He's showing us how to do this. How to be loving. How to be kind. How to be merciful. How to do these things. Now John 13 actually says, 'You call me teacher and Lord, rightly so, for that is what I am. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you.' So Jesus tells us right out, He's our example. He's talking about communion in this particular case, but I think that applies to everything. So number one, Jesus is our example. We know that, right?

So if we accept that Jesus is our example, we can do a little logic proof here that will be fun this morning. Israel is going to enjoy this and the rest of you are like, 'oh no, we're going to talk about math again.' This one's super easy, ok? Given that Jesus desires and chases the lost, do you believe that? Right? We just read two parables about it, right? Given that Jesus is our

example, do you believe that? We just read a verse where Jesus says, 'I'm the example.' If those two things are true, what can we learn? Therefore, We should chase after the lost too. Oh no, Bill. You just ruined a perfectly good sermon. See, I was enjoying it when you were talking about Jesus chasing after me. That's great. That makes me feel so good that Jesus is coming for me and everything is wonderful. And hey, pastor can help too. Yay! Go team! But I don't want to do that. That's not what I want to do. And we have a thousand reasons why we're not supposed to do that. Right? I'm scared. I don't know what to say. They're going to make fun of me. I'm going to lose friends. On and on and on and on and on and on it goes. Right? But that's not the way it's supposed to work. Jesus wants us to be involved in the work of finding the lost. And I'll be honest with you, there's times I'm like, 'God, why?' It would have been so much easier, the angels could have done a lot better job at this. That's the way God wants to do it. That's what He's asked us to do. Right?

Let's go back to our first couple of sentences here. We talked about that. I said we're going to be really important. Luke 15, verse 1-3. It said, 'Now the tax collectors and the sinners were all gathered around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomed sinners and eats with them,' and Jesus told them this parable.'

Jesus told them. Who is them? The Pharisees and the teachers, right? And the sinners and tax collectors can hear, but he's talking to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. And what does he tell them in these parables? You are doing it wrong. You're not supposed to be pushing the sinners away. You're supposed to be going after them and bringing them in. You got it wrong way around, buddy. Right?

Now, we know this. We've heard this. This is the Christian creed and motto. We've heard it. But how many of us are actually doing it? Inviting our friends and our neighbors. I read a study a while ago, and I couldn't find it again, but it talked about how few Christians invite somebody to church every year. I mean it was like single digit percentage. Out of all the

Christians in the world, you know, it's like 5% a year invite somebody to church. It's really a ridiculously low number. It's horrible. Meanwhile, 90% of the people that are unchurched say they would go to church if a friend invited them. So you get 90% of the people say I'd go to church if somebody asked me and only 5% of us ask. We got it wrong way around. We're not doing it, right? Right. We should be caring for the people that are far from Jesus. And if you want to have eternal significance, there's only one thing you need to do. Chase after the lost. It's that simple.

As an engineer, I often have to think about what happens in our decisions down the road. If we make this decision when we're building this, how is that going to affect us down the road? Maintenance. Is it going to be easy to maintain? Is it going to cost us? Is it going to limit us so we can't do something else? And so I'm always trying to think, what happens down the road. Well, think with me down the road. Jesus comes. You go to heaven. And Jesus says, who did you bring with you? And you say, well, nobody. I got me here. Doesn't that count? You think Jesus is going to be happy with that answer? What about your kids? What about your spouse? What about your neighbors, your co-workers? What about all those people I put into your life? Didn't you bring any of them? No, man, that was too scary. I don't want to have to have that conversation. Right? I don't want to have to have that conversation.

So, reflection. Are you doing the things you need to do to live a life of significance? If you want significance in this life on this planet, you want to be rich, famous, powerful, whatever it is, you want to be the best shot-putter on the planet. If you want to be the best shot-putter, what do you have to do? Practice throwing an iron ball around. Okay? You've got to put in the work. If you want to have eternal significance, which I hope we all want to have, more than earthly significance, what do you have to do? Put in a little work and chase after the lost. Try and bring them home. Not everybody's gonna say yes. Not everybody said yes to Jesus, I mean if

people said no to Jesus they're gonna say no to you. Guarantee it. Guarantee it. Because Jesus did a whole lot better at it than I can but not everyone's gonna say yes, but some are. Some are. So here's your challenge this week. I want you to pray for and to watch for opportunities to chase after the lost and help point them back to Jesus. Now some of us may be at different points in this journey and some of us may be praying a prayer to God saying, 'I'm so scared, Lord, I don't know what to do. Help me know what to do.' You think God will answer that prayer? Yes! What if you say, 'God, okay, I'm ready. I'm going to give this a try. My knees are knocking. My heart's racing. I'm scared to death. But point me to somebody that I can talk to that's ready. Somebody that will say yes. Let's start with an easy one, Lord. Somebody that's right there. Is God going to answer that prayer? Yes. Yes. Because there's rejoicing in Heaven over those who repent. Alright? Pray. Be intentional. Ask for discernment. Ask for courage. Whatever the case is for you. God will answer that prayer. And then the adventure begins. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for teaching us how important it is to chase after the lost. Lord, sometimes we get all caught up in me. We go to church and we do the things, and we forget to bring somebody along with us, Lord. Help us not to forget to do that anymore. Help us to be the kind of people that are anxious to bring our friends to church. Not because it's the coolest church in town, but because the coolest God in town is here. Be with us, Lord. Give us the encouragement, the courage that we need. Give us the discernment that we need. Help us to say the right thing at the right time so that others may know about You. In Jesus' name we pray, In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.