

## Saturday – You Lost Me

Read “The Parable of the Lost Sheep” in Luke 15:1-7, focusing on the key verse, Luke 15:7. *“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.”* David Kinnaman disturbs the Church. In his book *You Lost Me*, Kinnaman tries to make sense of the Barna Group research regarding young adults, 18-30. 59% of them have stopped attending church after being regular attenders. In terms of Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep, Kinnaman makes it clear that the strays are leaving in large numbers because of the ninety-nine. They say the ninety-nine are overprotective, shallow, antagonistic to science, out of touch with sexuality, unnecessarily exclusive and unfriendly to those who doubt. The ninety-nine are discussing the research. They wonder, “can we change? How can we change and still be faithful to the Scriptures? Can we become more creative? Can we listen? Can we partner young and old together in spiritual formation and service?” Meanwhile, the ninety-nine trust the Shepherd who does not sit idle at the gate to the fold. He is out there seeking the young, restless, wandering ones. He serves. He lays down His life for them. He will find them and bring them home. PRAYER: *Lord, bring them home, every lost one, safe and sound. Amen*

## Sunday – Value

Read “The Parable of the Lost Coin” in Luke 15:8-10, focusing on the key verse, Luke 15:8, *“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?”* Jesus’ parable of the lost coin gives us an inanimate object. The coin was a day’s wage. The woman had a total of ten coins, perhaps in a piece of jewelry from her wedding. Unlike a sheep, a coin is lifeless with no will of its own. A coin cannot contribute to its being found the way a sheep might bleat out in terror and get a shepherd’s attention. If the coin is to be found, it will only be because of the woman’s persistence. Repentance here is totally dependent on being found by God. What’s more, a coin’s value remains the same, lost or found. It is no less valued because it is lost. A lost sheep may be injured or its wool damaged, but a lost coin retains its value. Anyone who has ever misplaced a watch or a ring knows how the lost item can become even more valuable to the one seeking it, in its lostness to its seeker. Here a lost soul is affirmed as valuable to God, worthy of effort, and no less valuable to God in its lostness. PRAYER: *Lord, help me to value the lost enough to seek them out as precious. Amen*

### IMMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL

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*Devotions for  
the week of  
March 26, 2017*

## WHAT NOW?

1. Take our Savior’s generosity to heart and look for at least one way to share His generosity with someone this week. Surprise someone with a generous gift or a generous action, undergirded with His generous love.
2. Continue with the “Love Assignment” of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. This is week 6 of 16, love as it’s expressed in “not being rude.” How can you practice love by not being rude this week? Again, let Love Work through you as you “work” it with the people in your life.

*If you would like to receive daily Bring It Home devotions by email, please contact the church office: [churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org](mailto:churchoffice@immanuelloveland.org)*

## Monday – Generosity

Read “The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard” in Matthew 20:1-16, focusing on the key verse Matthew 15, “*Or do you begrudge my generosity?*” Grace gives more than is expected. Ask the eleventh-hour workers in Jesus’ story who walk away with a full day’s pay. When confronted with his splurge, the master responds, “Do you begrudge my generosity?” God is generous. By divine generosity, we live more comfortably than the vast majority of people on the earth. By that same generosity, we have the spiritual riches of forgiveness, life and salvation won for us by Jesus Christ. God’s generosity extends all the way into heaven itself with life after death more beautiful than we can imagine. No wonder we feel so good when we tip a server a little extra. No wonder there is this surge of joy when we give extra to a charity or the Church. It’s no surprise that volunteering an extra hour should make us smile. When we are generous, we are like God, and when we are like God, we will be fulfilled because we have been made to be like God. We are made in God’s image. *PRAYER: Lord, make me generous like You. Amen*

## Tuesday - Pharisees

Read “The Parable of the Lost Sheep” in Luke 15:1-7, focusing on the key verses, Luke 15:1-2 “*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”*” Luke 15 gives us Jesus’ three parables of the lost—the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. We forget sometimes that He told these parables to grumbling Pharisees who resented how He surrounded himself with blatant sinners. Jesus was a magnet for these lost souls and soon wore the label “friend of sinners.” The Pharisees began as a conservative sect in Judaism out to save their religion from extinction. They morphed into finger-pointing, holier-than-thou judges of others’ behavior. The word Luke uses for *grumbled* in v.2 is the same word Jesus uses in His story of the vineyard workers when they complain to the master that they should have been paid more (Matthew 20:11-12) Tullian Tchividjian writes in *Jesus + Nothing = Everything*: “Legalism breeds a sense of entitlement that turns us into complainers.” We must know and identify the Pharisee within us. Do I sometimes think that I am entitled to God’s favor? Have I withdrawn my love from those who behave poorly? Have I lost my joy in seeing a sinner repent and believe? *PRAYER: Lord, increase my love for the lost. Amen*

## Wednesday – One

Read “The Parable of the Lost Sheep” in Luke 15:1-7 focusing on the key verse Luke 15:4, “*What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?*” Among the first art images depicted by early Christians in sculpture and fresco was a young shepherd with a sheep on his shoulders. In that early image, as in Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep, just one sheep rides on the shepherd’s shoulders. Losing one sheep matters. There is no writing off a single loss as a not-so-bad attrition rate of 1%. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to

go and find the one. That is how it works. God comes to us one by one and cares for us one by one. Should we stray, we will be missed. “His eye is on the sparrow,” as the song says. There may be a flock of one hundred, but each one still matters. So David sang, “The Lord is my shepherd.” So the shepherd announces his joy “I have found my sheep that was lost” (v.6). So the whole village joins in the celebration. So, Jesus says, heaven celebrates just like that when just one sinner repents. I am one, only one, but to God and the angels, I matter. *PRAYER: Lord, give me Your heart for each and every wandering, wayward sinner. Amen*

## Thursday – Shoulders

Read “The Parable of the Lost Sheep” in Luke 15:1-7, focusing on the key verse, Luke 15:5, “*And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*” An ice-breaker question in a small group Bible study asked simply, “Where in your childhood did you feel especially safe and happy?” Without hesitating one member of the group answered, “That’s easy. It was riding on my dad’s shoulders high above a crowd of people.” Other group members remembered and smiled. In Jesus’ parable, the shepherd lays the sheep on his shoulders, rejoicing. He bears the terrified sheep home on his shoulders with no small difficulty. Leashes are for dogs, not sheep. This stray would not stray again on the way home. To get to the sheep, a predator would need to deal with the shepherd first. The shoulders of Jesus Christ can be trusted to carry the lost. Those same shoulders bore the sins of the whole world. His shoulders carried the cross. An old prayer, attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux, prays: “O Loving Jesus, meek Lamb of God, I a miserable sinner, salute and worship the most sacred wound of Thy shoulder on which Thou didst bear Thy heavy cross.” *PRAYER: Lord, in response to Your love, help me to bear my cross and shoulder my responsibilities as I follow You. Amen*

## Friday – Joy

Read “The Parable of the Lost Sheep” in Luke 15:1-7, focusing on the key verse, Luke 15:6, “*And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.”*” This is quite a shepherd! First, he is so obsessed with finding one lost sheep that he leaves ninety-nine behind in the wilderness. Then, when he finds the stray and carries it on his shoulders, he doesn’t return the sheep to the deserted flock in the wilderness, but goes home first. Why wouldn’t he have carried the sheep back to the rest of the flock grazing in the wilderness? The answer has to be in his joy. So glad is the heart of the shepherd at the finding of the lost sheep that he cannot bear that gladness alone. He goes home because there his family and friends in the village can share his joy as they see his smiling face beneath the shouldered sheep. When the Church loses the joy in heaven over every found lost soul, we devalue the grace of God and one another. Every church, no matter its size, has an anthology of lost-and-found stories, each one personal and each one bursting with communal joy. *PRAYER: Lord, bring news of relentless joy to the church I call home. Amen*