

Read: Luke 15:11-32

Lost and Found

Luke 15:20,24

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him... "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What's your favorite thing? A blanket or stuffed animal that you always sleep with? A toy or game that's always fun to play with? A book or movie that you always love to read or watch, no matter how many times you've read or watched it before? Imagine how sad you would be if you lost it, if you couldn't find it anywhere in your room or your house.

In today's reading, Jesus tells a story about a man who lost something far more valuable than a stuffed animal or a toy or a book. This man lost his son, and he was very sad.

How could a father lose his son? It wasn't the father's fault. It was the son's. The son demanded money from his father, money that was meant to be given him in the future. After his father gave it to him, the son left for a faraway country. He spent all his father's money and had nothing left—not even enough to buy something to eat. The son realized his mistake. He came home, hoping that his father would give him a job as a servant.

Instead, the father welcomed his son home with open arms. He was so happy that he found the son he thought he'd lost. He forgave everything the son had done wrong because he never stopped loving him.

Just like in Jesus' story, God the Father lost something too. And just like in the story, it wasn't God's fault—it was ours. Can you see yourself in the lost son? Have you gotten a little wild and been told to calm down? What happened when you didn't listen? How sad God the Father is when we run away and don't listen to him!

But through it all, he never stops loving us. In a couple weeks, we will be reminded why. At the cross, it's the Father's Son, his one and only Son, who suffers and dies for sons and daughters who wander off and get lost. Because of his love for us, God forgives and welcomes us back home with open arms. He sends his Holy Spirit to work faith in our hearts and make us his sons and daughters. And one day, when we are finally in our heavenly home, we will see our Father face-to-face.

Until that day, remember how much God loves you. Remember that God always welcomes you back home. Remember that by faith, you are God's child—and nothing separates you from the love of your heavenly Father.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What did the father in Jesus' story lose?
- What did the father do when his son came back home?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why did the father in Jesus' parable welcome his son back home with open arms?
- Discuss a time in which you were running from God. What (or who) helped you to return?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Have you ever found that if you have some money, everyone wants to be your friend until the money is gone? Discuss what true friendship looks like.
- When the son returned, the father could have greeted him with "I told you so." What does the father do to make the son feel at home? What has God done to make us feel at home?

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for making me your favorite thing, for always loving welcoming me back home. Keep me close to you until I see you face-to-face in heaven. Amen.