

**Scripture:** Luke 15:1-25 (Sheep and Coin)

**Metaphor:** ranger’s station sign

**Theme:** Lost and Found

**Felt Need:** We feel unworthy and undeserving of God’s love

**Desired Outcome:** We are made in God’s Image; worthy of his love

**Altar Display:** Ranger Station Sign

**Altar Display**

Ranger’s station sign.

**Call to Worship**

This morning we continue The Journey we’ve been on now for four weeks. We’ve found Authentic Direction in scripture; we’ve learned to see God in the Unexpected; and last week we learned that Recalculating means we serve a God of second chances.

Today we may take a slight wrong turn and find ourselves a little lost.

How many of you love the great outdoors? Anyone like to rough it?

One of the most fun things about journeying off the beaten path is exploring trails, streams, caves, nooks, crannies and more. Have you ever been so engrossed in your exploration that all of a sudden, a terrible realization suddenly comes over you - that you are totally lost? I’ve been there and it is no fun.

In moments like that, you begin to remember everything you learned watching episodes of TV survival shows like Survivorman, Man Vs. Wild. You search for recognizable landmarks, places that look familiar, and if you’re really lucky, you might even find a sign to point you in the direction to go.

A sign like the one in our graphic today can bring so much hope. It reads “Ranger station”.

Have you ever wondered what a ranger does? As I understand it, their basic job is to look over things in National Parks, forests and wild lands. They’re there to help everything in the forest including the people in it. One of their most important jobs is to help people who are lost find their way home.

That is really someone’s job?

You might not fully appreciate that until you wonder a little too far away from civilization. Finding your way back; after taking many wrong turns might just lead you into a state of panic. That is, until and unless you encounter a simple sign with an arrow pointing towards the ranger’s station.

Relief would come over you because you’d know there was someone out there to help you find your way. As you approach the ranger’s station, those famous song lyrics echoed may even echo in your mind, “I once was lost, but now am found.”

In this morning’s scripture lesson, we find all sorts of things (and people) getting lost and found. Jesus first tells of the story of the lost sheep. Ninety-nine are in the fold, but one is lost so the shepherd goes in search of it and is filled with joy when he finds it.

Likewise, in the story of the lost coin, a woman loses one of her 10 coins. After an exhaustive search, she finds the coin. She is overjoyed when she finds it; so much so, she invites her friends over for a celebration.

Finally, when a father’s son requests his inheritance, the son leaves, squanders everything, and is lost to the world. With very few options, the son returns to the father to beg for place among his servants. The father is elated. His son has come home and is found!

Like being lost in the wilderness and finding one’s way home, Jesus is like the park ranger who guides us and leads us in to a state of being found.

He is a guide and a resource for those that need it. No matter what path you’re on, no matter how much time you spend in the wilderness, no matter how many recalculations you’ve made; The Ranger is here to be the caregiver for the entire forest.

When we’re young, we might not understand what this meant in our lives, but as adults we may have a better understanding of what it’s all about now now. Truth is, as long as you’re in God’s forest; as long as you’re in God’s care; God will be there to lead you home.

Today we continue our time on the journey together as we explore what it means to embrace the love that God has for us. We once were **Lost, but now are Found**. Let’s prepare our hearts by standing and worshipping together

**Closing words**

Remember as you leave this place, you were lost, but now are found! Amen.