



SEARCHING
FOR GOD

Topic:	Connecting with God
Main Point:	God celebrates when individuals include Him in their lives
Intended Response:	Place our lives in God's hands
Key Verse:	Luke 15:8-10

Introduction

Many things in life can get in front of our relationship with God. Like the prodigal son and lost coin, we can lose our way.

These parables reminds us that God searching for us, and when He finds us, He is overjoyed.

A. The prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32)

- God is searching for us
- When we return, He is overjoyed with love for us
- Jesus came to seek and save the lost

Point One: Jesus is our way back to God.

B. The lost coin (Lk 15:8-10)

- We are lost without God
- Jesus is searching for people us
- Ask, "Am I close to God, or am I lost like the son or coin?"

Point Two: God is filled with joy when individuals come back to Him.

C. Short story (optional)

- *You may want to share a Christmas story.*
- *There is a short story written specifically for this sermon*
- *Or, share a testimony of someone coming to faith at Christmas time.*

Point Three: A story that captures: God's joy, or salvation, or human worth.

Teaching Illustrations and props:

This sermon uses the story of the prodigal son and lost coin. You may want to hide a coin in the room and ask the kids to go and find it. There is also space in this sermon for you to read a short Christmas story. If you have the book, bring it with you and show it to the kids.

More resources for this sermon, including PowerPoint slides: www.SArmy.org.au

Introduction	<p>Welcome everyone to church to day. Merry Christmas! I hope you're having a great morning. It's wonderful to have the kids with us in the service today.</p> <p>Christmas is such a great day – celebrating the birth of Jesus is a wonderful highlight in our community each year.</p> <p>If you are visiting us here today you are so welcome – we hope you have a great morning. There's plenty of food on afterwards so please stay around.</p>
Insert story	<p><i>You may want to jump straight into the message or share a Christmas story. You may want to use the short story written specifically for this sermon (pages 5-7), read your favourite Christmas story book or share a testimony of someone coming to faith at Christmas time.</i></p>
Transition	<p>Over the last few weeks, we have been sharing a series called Searching for God. This morning I'd like to wrap this series up with a short devotional thought.</p>
The prodigal son	<p>The other week (<i>Message 2 A God shaped hole</i>) we read the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Jesus told this parable to convey the sense of love and joy God carries in His heart for each one of us.</p> <p>As you know it's the story of a young man who takes money from his father, leaves home, and ends up in all sorts of trouble. The climax of the story is when the son returns home to face his father. His father, instead of being angry, is filled with love and overjoyed at his son's return.</p> <p>The point of that story is that God is searching for us, waiting for us to return to Him, and is overjoyed when we do.</p> <p>Busyness can get in the way of our relationship with God. We can get so busy with the demands of life that we forget to pray or spend time with God.</p> <p>We can become self-focused, distracted or distant from God. Or like the prodigal son, we may lose ourselves in a destructive lifestyle.</p> <p>During those times we can feel like we cannot come back to God, or we can feel like our actions make us unworthy of God's love.</p> <p>But that's why Christmas is such an amazing time. The gift of Jesus reminds us that it isn't about God searching for perfect people; it's about God sending His perfect Son for us needy, imperfect humans. God knows we need Him.</p>

	Like the prodigal son we all wander away from God at times. That's why He sent Jesus. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Lk 19:10). He is our way back to God.
Point 1	Jesus is our way back to God.
The lost coin	<p>This reminds me of another parable...</p> <p>(MSG Lk 15:8-10) <i>So Jesus told them this story: "Imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and search the whole house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it?"</i></p> <p><i>And when she finds it you can be sure she'll call her friends and neighbours: 'Celebrate with me! I found my lost coin!' Count on it—that's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God."</i></p> <p><i>Insert game: hide a coin in the room and give the kids 2 minutes to go and find it. Talk about the joy when one of the kids find it.</i></p>
Point 2	God is filled with joy when individuals come back to Him.
Conclusion	<p>Like the message of the prodigal son, God is waiting for us. No matter what we've been through, no matter what we've done or what we've experienced – God is full of joy when we return to Him.</p> <p>And like the woman searching for the coin, Jesus is searching for people who will place their trust in God. And when that happens – all of heaven erupts with joy and excitement!</p>
Call to Action	<p>It's a simple thought, but an important one, "am I close to God or am I lost like the son or coin?" Can I ask you, is Jesus searching for you this Christmas? Did you find yourself in church for the first time in a long time? It's not by accident.</p> <p>If you feel you've wandered a bit from God this year, now is the time to come back into the arms of God. If you have never placed your trust in Jesus, can I encourage you to do that here today – the greatest gift any of us can receive is new life in Jesus – and it's available for everyone.</p>
Carols	<p>Christmas is day for us to remember the most amazing gift of God – the gift of Jesus. Let's celebrate Jesus as we sing together...</p> <p><i>Enjoy singing Christmas carols together.</i></p>

The Lonely Coin

A long time ago, there once there was a lonely penny. It started its life as a freshly minted, glowing orange coin. This was back in the day when you could still use one and two cent coins to buy things.

The penny was so full of joy and excitement about life. “Where will I go?” the coin thought. “Maybe a famous sports player will keep me in their pocket for good luck during their big games. Or maybe I’ll be used to buy the most exquisite meal ever. Or perhaps I’ll be placed in one of those special red kettles and go on to help others find hope throughout the world?”

The penny had a good start in life. It was shipped off to a local bank and placed neatly in a tray next to rows of five, ten, and twenty-cent coins. One day, a man came into the bank to withdraw some money. He was carrying a brown leather brief case in one hand and was holding a paper in the other. Two children danced around his feet, one was a small boy with thick yellow-rimmed glasses, and the other was a young girl holding a sparkly green bag with feathers of all sorts of colours sticking out of it.

The teller handed him handful of notes and coins, including the shiny penny. The man placed them into his brief case. “Ah, how soft and warm”, the penny thought. “I’ll just slide myself into the corner to stay safe and warm.” The man wished the teller a good day and headed off with his children. The shiny penny stayed in that briefcase for a long time.

One day, many years later, the man was searching through his briefcase and came across the penny. It still shone as he lifted it up to the light. I know what I’ll do with you; “John, John!, the man called out. Just then, a young man with yellow-rimmed glasses came into the room. “Here, take this with you for good luck.”

The young man placed the coin in his pocket and headed out the door. “This is it!” the penny thought, “My next adventure begins”. As the young man stood waiting for his bus, he reached into his pocket and pulled out his fare. The penny was lifted up at the same time, but accidentally slipped out of his pocket.

The shiny penny hit the ground and began rolling quickly down the street. It wobbled and wobbled, turning ever so slightly right, until it rolled straight into a pile of leaves. It was stuck! It couldn’t move! “Wait, wait” – but it was too late, the young man stepped onto the bus, leaving the coin behind.

Over time, more leaves gathered around the penny, as well as an old receipt, some dirt and a blue piece of plastic. The penny stayed stuck there for many months. It lost its shine, lost its joy, and could only wish for the comfort of the brown briefcase it once called home.

Then the rains came. Oh, how they poured and poured! Soon the rain formed a constant stream flowing down the gutters picking up anything in its path. The waters gathered around the leaves, the dirt and the penny, lifted them all up and carried them away. They floated down the street until they went tumbling down a nearby sewer into a great rushing body of water.

The coin was carried out to sea where it drifted aimlessly for years and years. Eventually, it was washed up on a distant shore, not knowing where it was or where it came from. The penny was now without sheen or shine. The salt water had turned its once luminous glowing orange to a dull and faded brown, with speckles of pink and blue rust. “Oh dear”, cried the penny “this is not at all how I thought life would be”, as it sank deeper and deeper into the sand.

One day during summer, the penny felt a jolt! A blue spade scooped it up and threw it into a red bucket full of sand, seaweed and white sea shells. It could feel the warmth of the sun as it lay there, the smell of coconut oil in the air, and the sounds of joy as children splashed in the waves.

All of a sudden, the penny then was frozen by fear, for a huge black nose was sniffing all around it! It was a big, wet, black Labrador looking for food. The penny inched its way back into the sand, trying to escape being swallowed up by the dog – that’s one adventure he didn’t want to go on!

Just then, a young boy came rushing to its rescue. The boy pushed the dog out the way and picked up the penny. “Mummy, look what I’ve found”, he yelled. He then placed the dull penny in his back pocket and continued building his sand castle.

The next day, the young boy and his mother went out grocery shopping. When they came to the local Milk bar, the boy asked if he could have a treat and raced inside. At the front of the store was a glass counter full of lollies: gummy bears, candy musk pieces, mint leaves, licorice straps, red straps drizzled in sugar – the boy was in heaven.

The doorbell rang as his mum entered the store saying, “only one Mike – just one”. As he pointed to his favourite one, the shopkeeper smiled. The young boy smiled back as he gleefully placed his lonely penny on the shopkeepers counter.

“He won’t accept me”, the penny thought, “I’m faded and dull; I’ve been through mud, sewers and all manner of things, he probably can’t even tell I was a penny once”. I know this

young boy is excited for me, but I can't see why? I'm worthless now. No one will except and old, dull, rusty and faded penny", the penny sighed to himself.

The shopkeeper pulled out a pair of thick yellow glasses from his shirt pocket. He picked up the penny and held it up close to the sun. He turned it over, and over, and over once more. He brought the penny close to eyes and stared intently at it. "I'm done for", thought the penny. "Now he'll know how worthless I am".

"You know", said the shopkeeper, "I haven't seen a penny in years. This might be the last penny around; it might be the only one of its kind? It looks very old. A bit rusty here and there. The year it was made has faded so much; I can just barely make it out".

A single tear began to well up in the young boy's eye as he sensed the shopkeeper was not going to accept his lonely penny. He was really excited to have found the penny and he really wanted that lolly!

The shopkeeper placed the penny back on the counter. After a long pause he turned it over, pointed to it and nodded his head towards the dull coin. The young boy shuffled closer, propped himself up on his tip toes, placed his hands on the counter and stared at the images on the back of the penny. It had a royal wreath running around its edges, two arrows crossing over each other at the bottom, a big star in the top right, and in the middle was the face of a young man wearing a crown.

The shopkeeper smiled at the boy and said, "no matter where this penny has been, no matter how used or faded it looks, no matter how old it is, this penny has value because it bears the mark of our king." At this, the shopkeeper handed the boy the lolly he wanted.

After they left the shop, the shopkeeper folded up his yellow-rimmed glasses, picked up the penny and paused for a moment. He then smiled to himself, and placed the penny in his pocket.

- Everyone one of us has value for we are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27)

"So Jesus told them this story: 'Imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and search the whole house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it? And when she finds it you can be sure she'll call her friends and neighbours: 'Celebrate with me! I found my lost coin!' Count on it—that's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God.'" (MSG Luke 15:8-10)

The End

Lk 15:11-32 (NIV)

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

"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. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

" 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "

Lk 19:10

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

MSG Lk 15:8-10

So Jesus told them this story: “Imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one. Won’t she light a lamp and scour the house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it?

And when she finds it you can be sure she’ll call her friends and neighbours: ‘Celebrate with me! I found my lost coin!’ Count on it—that’s the kind of party God’s angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God.”