

Fifth Sunday of Easter - May 18, 2025

Acts 16:13–22, 40 (or Judith 13:1–16); Psalm 102:17–21, 25–28; Colossians 4:10–17; Luke 15:1–10

Lost and Found

1. I discovered cycling during the pandemic.
 - a. I knew how to ride a bike, but I had never tried to go long distances on a bike in a formal way.
 - b. I had been running for about 9 years before the pandemic came on.
 - c. I haven't run all my life.
 - d. And something got in my head about trying to pick up cycling as a sport after a running injury running.
 - e. Cycling seemed like a safe thing to do in pandemic out there by myself, riding my bike, adding miles setting goals for myself to increase those smiles.
 - f. My first goal was to make it to Hope and back and I did.
 - g. Next goal was Seymour, next Franklin.
 - h. I did riding by myself navigating with my phone, listening to a podcast or just to the birds.
 - i. Sometime that year Chris George, who I know is a serious cyclist, told me about this group that goes riding every Monday evening.
 - j. They depart from the Columbus Cycling & Fitness Shop around 6:00.
 - k. I was nervous because I imagined some very serious cyclists in that group, and I didn't know if I would be able to keep up honestly, but Chris had told me that it is what's called a no drop group.
 - i. And what that means in practical terms is that no matter how slow you might be going, someone will ride along with you.
 - ii. Basically the group self divides into two possibly three groups with the first bunch of writers heading out to Grandview Lake first.
 1. They are fast.
 2. You can tell just by the gear and the trim bodies and strong legs.
 3. They are fast men and women who are going to just kill it out there.
 4. I fit somewhere in the second or third group that first day and I thought "let's see how long this lasts."
 5. I concentrated on riding and didn't think about the route the group was taking
 6. I just concentrated on just not hitting the back tire of the guy in front of me.
 7. We were bunched up and that's when I discovered one of the benefits of group writing: drafting.
 8. Because there are riders in front of me, they effectively create a wedge, and those of us in the bubble of air behind them can ride with less effort, less wind resistance
 9. I felt I was flying!
 - iii. We got to Grandview and there was another decision to be made there.
 1. Part of my group was going to go around the dam (the fast group was already going) and the other part was going to head back

2. I decided to go around the dam, and I tried to keep up, and was close enough to folks, but when I finally made it all the way around the dam, my group, which had waited, was ready to head back all together.
2. In today's parable of the lost sheep I wonder why the sheep had gotten separated and lost
 - a. It's not clear whether the sheep wandered off, or the shepherd got distracted, or the shepherd dog was asleep on the job.
 - b. The point of the of the parable isn't to place blame but rather to understand what it means to be a group together.
 - i. Our society places so much emphasis on the individual.
 1. There are phrases like "lifting yourself up by your bootstraps" or "look out for number one" or "you get what you deserve."
 2. It is as though anything that happens is only because of what one's own effort might be.
 3. And while I don't disagree that the individual has to put their own best effort forward, I also know that as a parent or as a community member, I want everybody to be able to be happy to be successful in whatever shape that is.
 4. And there's a sense that we can be supportive of one another to make that happen.
 - c. The parable speaks about the shepherd looking for the one sheep, and I wonder: Where was the rest of the herd? I wonder if the shepherd had slowly moved the herd around while looking for the lost sheep.
 - i. I wonder whether that herd could have been a no drop herd that needed to be complete in order to be successful.
 - ii. There are people who look at this passage and think about the lost as people who don't know God.
 - iii. I suppose one can read it that way. But that Shepherd was neither blaming nor judging that lost sheep.
 - iv. The shepherd was so excited that the sheep was found and back in the herd
3. Maybe a learning for us this morning is to shape or understand our community as a no drop community
 - a. We could be a no drop community, where we work to ensure that those who might be lagging behind are not lagging behind alone, but are surrounded by a community.
 - b. We can be a group that is supportive and encouraging.
 - i. Imagine what it might look like to say that we go together wherever we might go as a community.
 - ii. And not just to think that community is only those who can go fastest, but rather to understand the community is about making sure all of us can go and can enjoy the ride, can benefit from the ride.
 - c. There's an African saying (not sure from exactly which country) that says: "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.
 - d. As the body of Christ, we can focus on going far together. And if we do that, if we think about going together, not only will we get far, but no one will be lost.