



Lost & Found

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by Luke 15:1-7

Newspaper & gold leaf collage with digital drawing

I began my artwork for this series by collaging torn strips of newspaper articles together, overlapping global headlines with photos of current events. Along the torn edges, I added gold leaf. Then I photographed the result, editing the photos in black and white. These photos would become the backdrop for my pieces, as I wanted my digital drawings to emerge within the noise of the world's deepest pains, divisions, and everything in between. The collage is also a reference to theologian Karl Barth's famous quote about reading the bible and the newspaper together.⁷ I wanted the gold leaf to represent God's presence in the spaces in between the events and forces that tear us apart.

On September 27th, 2024, I began drawing the Good Shepherd with the lost sheep tenderly wrapped around his shoulders. As I worked, rain pummeled our roof, saturating the ground with an endless deluge as the wide bands of tropical storm Helene⁸ reached our high-elevation town of Black Mountain, NC. The next day, winds roared and threw trees to the ground like dominos. We lost power, then water, then cell service. We didn't know it yet, but every creek and river had swelled with enormous force, sweeping away everything in their path. Landslides, sinkholes, and extreme flooding ravaged the entire region of Western North Carolina, taking homes, towns, and human lives.

We were incredibly and graciously spared, having no flooding in our house or trees on our roof, so as soon as the storm relented, we headed out to find our friends and family by foot. As we walked through our small town, we found ourselves in a maze-like wasteland, changing our route every other turn due to downed trees or power lines, or washed-out roads. Progressively, we found family and friends, greeting them with great relief and urgent questions: "Do you have enough water to drink? Do you have water for flushing? Do you need any food?" It would be nearly 6 days before any emergency relief could arrive with food, water, and supplies. Meanwhile, neighbors survived by the help of their neighbors. Churches opened their doors. Firefighters and first responders persisted, despite perilous rescue missions. Helicopters air-lifted stranded people to safety.

When I began this artwork, I naively hoped to gain insight into Jesus' parable of the lost sheep. In that process, I did not wish to *become* the lost sheep and live through the greatest natural disaster to hit my hometown in over a thousand years. But as I read this parable again, now over 6 weeks after the storm, what strikes me is the pursuit of the shepherd, so singularly focused on the one who is lost, vulnerable, and at-risk. The Good Shepherd steadies the sheep on his shoulders and steps out of the frame toward us. His gaze finds mine, and I almost hear him whisper, "I will never stop searching for the lost. I will never stop rejoicing when one is found." —Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

⁷ Karl Barth, 1886-1968, was a Swiss Reformed theologian. In a 1963 *Time Magazine* article, he urges young theologians to take the Bible and the newspaper and read both.

⁸ At the end of September 2024, Hurricane Helene hit the Southeastern US, devastating many regions, particularly Western North Carolina. Catastrophic flooding caused billions of dollars of damage, took hundreds of lives, and left many lives unaccounted for.



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TODAY is your last chance to turn your loose change into meals for those in need! My Coins Count has raised \$310.85 (plus a \$500 match!), and we can do even better.

Let's connect our daily blessings to helping others:

- Give 5 cents for each food that you ate yesterday made with flour, beans, oil, or salt. (These are staple foods MCC shares with people after disasters.)
- Read 1 Samuel 25:18, where Abigail makes food for David and his men to make peace after her husband offends David. Give 10 cents for each food listed.
- MCC gives families in Uganda chicks to raise for eggs. Give 5 cents for each egg in your fridge.



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