

Saturday "Sermon"

David C. Stancil, Ph.D.

First Baptist Church of Bristol, Virginia

dave@fbcbristol.org

November 28, 2009

Hunting . . . Waiting

My Thanksgiving week began with deer hunting near Galax, Virginia. Four deer were harvested in our two-day hunt.

I couldn't claim any of the four deer taken, since no deer presented themselves to my rifle, but I had a wonderful time nonetheless. Dawn was especially wonderful as I took my place on a ridge in fog-shrouded darkness and watched the fog burn off little by little, revealing the woodlands below.

One has a lot of time to think while sitting silently and still in the woods. We called what we were doing "hunting," and we had indeed made some considerable effort to position ourselves in the right place and at the right time in order to find deer. But a great deal of what we did might be more accurately called "waiting" rather than "hunting." Once taking position, we waited for the deer to come to us.

As I watched the dawn creep over the mountains, I found myself remembering two stories Jesus told about hunting and waiting. Both stories are found in Luke 15.

The first story goes like this: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? . . . And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'"

In the second story, a man had two sons, the younger of which took a great deal of his father's money and wasted it on reckless living in a far country. When his money ran out, the son decided to return home to ask for his father's forgiveness. The Bible says that "while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."

Just as we went into the wilderness this week on a hunt, so our Heavenly Father pursues us into the various kinds of wilderness into which our bad choices take us. No matter where we've gotten ourselves stuck, our Father has followed us, and He is nearby. But the second story reminds us that God waits nearby until we're ready to come to Him. And when we do, He doesn't "shoot us" for our bad choices, but rather embraces us, welcoming us back to our True Home.

As we make our way once again from Thanksgiving to Christmas, are there ways in which you've gotten lost and need to come home? Your Father waits for you.