

Loving the Lost

#4 in Series: *Stories from The Master*

Have you ever been lost?... If so, you know the desperation and fear that grips you when you first realized you were lost... Have you ever had a loved one lost?... The same fear and desperation saturates the hearts of all who know and love the one who is lost...

Last September, a lady from Ohio was hiking in the Smokies with her daughter. They decided to separate and meet up together where they had parked their car... The problem – Susan Clements never made it back to her car. Somehow, she missed the trail leading back to the parking lot and ended up about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile off the trail and died as a result of hypothermia...

When her daughter realized that her mom must be lost – the call went out and a desperate search ensued. Our son-in-law became a part of that search team... There was desperate attempt to find Susan. Everything from dogs to drones was utilized in the effort to locate her before it was too late...

No one thought the effort was too much. No price was too expensive to pay if Susan Clements could have been found and rescued... Such is the attitude of those who love the lost...

Make no mistake about it – lost is lost – whether you are talking about one’s body – or one’s soul...

Luke chapter 15 records a 3-part story that Jesus tells that addresses the same audience and covers the same topic – lostness... There is a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son.

Today, we are only going to concentrate on the lost sheep and lost coin portions of the story under the title; *Loving the Lost*

Let’s pray.

Luke 15 (NASB)

¹ Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. ² Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

³ So He told them this parable, saying, ⁴ “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in

the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ 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 which was lost!’ ⁷ I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸ “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

⁹ When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’ ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

1. The Context (:1-2)

¹ Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. ² Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

- **The Personal Appeal:**

We need to note that Jesus – the true Jesus revealed in the Bible – has an amazing appeal to a desperate soul.

According to [Luke 14:25](#), there were large crowds following Jesus and listening to His messages... And Jesus was faithful to call those who follow Him into a life of discipleship and commitment. He presented strong challenges that did not deter people from following Him – rather Jesus’ faithfulness to the Truth would actually attract people to Him...

And it still does.

- **The People Involved:**

- **Tax collectors** – were also sinners of course – but they were considered a special class of sinners to be despised by others... They were

considered by many to be “traitors”... A tax-collector was a Jew who worked for the Roman government collecting taxes from his fellow-Jews to pay for this occupying / oppressive government of Rome...

Collecting taxes had become a corrupt system. Tax-collectors would often extort more money than Rome was requiring and they would simply “pocket the extra”... As a result, they were a hated group – not only by the religious Pharisees and Scribes, but by the average Jewish citizen...

- **Sinners** – were simply the “non-religious” Jews... They were people who like many in our culture today – did not grow up practicing the religion of their ancestors, or in many cases might be what are called “*Dones*” today...
- **Pharisees** – were the legalistic religious leaders of the day... There were other Jewish groups such as the Sadducees, Essenes, Herodians and Zealots. But the Pharisees were the ones who most often opposed Jesus and those who would follow Him.
- **Scribes** – were a distinct group, though many scribes were Pharisees – the scribes served much like an attorney. They had knowledge of the law and could draft legal documents (contracts for marriage, divorce, loans, inheritance, mortgages, the sale of land, and the like). Every village had at least one scribe (www.britannica.com) . They are mentioned here – as they are often mentioned in the same context as the Pharisee – because they most often adopted the same judgement attitude of the Pharisees in their condemnation of those who did not prescribe to their brand of Judaism...
- And the central figure to all of this is **Jesus** – He is really the One we need not lose sight of as we think through His story...
- **The Problem Indicated:**

The Problem?... was two-fold: First – for the most part – it seemed to be jealousy... People were coming to Jesus and not those who saw themselves as the cultural elite of the day...

And second – Jesus was welcoming those who were coming to Him... That was a problem, because no self-respecting Pharisee or Scribe would ever associate with tax-collectors and sinners – which seems ironic... Because had the tax-collectors and sinners reached out to the Pharisees and Scribes for help

in coming to truth – they would not have welcomed them... So how could a thinking Pharisee be jealous of something he despised... Such is the blinding ability of our own sin...

Warren Wiersbe – “Lost sinners came to Jesus, not because He catered to them or compromised His message, but because He cared for them. He understood their needs and tried to help them, while the Pharisees criticized them and kept their distance... The Pharisees had a knowledge of the Old Testament law and a desire for personal purity, yet they had no love for lost souls.”

A really sad fact for the Pharisees is that they failed to see their need for the Savior... They were blind to their own lostness...

So to help them see – Jesus gives –

2. The Response

³ So He told them this parable...

Remember – a parable is a story that the audience can relate to – but it is told with the idea of teaching a greater spiritual truth that the listener needs to know...

Notice that the word *parable* is singular – so even though there are three different stories to follow – there is really only one major truth Jesus is driving home... And just what is that major truth that we all need to know?...

People need to know that without Christ – they are *lost*...

To illustrate the seriousness of this truth – Jesus tells a few powerful stories... Let's read them one more time –

3. The Stories

³ So He told them this parable, saying, ⁴ “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ 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 which was lost!’ ⁷ I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over

ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸ “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

⁹ When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’ ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Just in the simple reading of the stories, you can sense the depth of emotion... There is the heartbreak of losing something precious – the desperation of searching for that cherished possession that is ultimately replaced with the exhilaration of great joy.

As we think through Jesus’ stories there are at least seven significant themes we need to grasp:

4. The Themes

The first theme we need to realize is –

- **The Reality of Loss**

“If he loses one of them” – it isn't strange that a sheep would be lost...

Adam Clarke (another 18th-19th C. British Bible Scholar) – “No creature strays more easily than a sheep; none is more heedless; and none so incapable of finding its way back to the flock, when once gone astray: it will bleat for the flock, and still run on in an opposite direction to the place where the flock is: this I have often noticed.”

According to **Isa. 53:6** and **1 Pet. 2:25** – “straying sheep” is a perfect description of us...

There is something else about sheep we need to understand... The sheep that is lost can never save itself... Nor can he find the shepherd on its own...

- **The Possibility of Found**

If the shepherd does not take action – the sheep was doomed...

One commentator pointed out that many rabbis at that time believed that God received the sinner who came to Him the right way... But in this parable, Jesus taught that God actively seeks out the lost sheep. He does not reluctantly receive the lost – instead – He searches after them... The Lord is seeking the sinner more than any sinner is seeking to find God.

[] Are you old enough to remember the “I Found It” campaign of the 1970s?...

Not only is the “finding” something that God does... The “saving” is His work too...

Jonah 2:9c (NASB) “... Salvation is from the Lord.”

Jesus not only found us and saved us – which is what **Luke 19:10** says was His purpose in coming in the first place – but He had to also carry us – for there is no strength or ability in ourselves to affect our own rescue...

Rom. 5:6 (NASB) “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”

By leaving the 99 sheep to go find the one – the shepherd was not saying they were unimportant... They were safe, but the lost sheep was in danger.

The fact that the shepherd would go after one sheep is proof that each animal was dear to him...

Jesus was not suggesting that the scribes and Pharisees were represented by the 99 and not in need of salvation – because they certainly were in need of being saved themselves!...

We must be careful and not try to assign meaning to every part of Jesus’ story – where He makes no specific spiritual point... To do so – we would be turning His parable into a mere man-made allegory and be in danger of distorting His message...

- **The Necessity of Repentance**

Though sheep do nothing to rescue themselves or repent – Jesus mentioned the need for repentance in the last few words of both of these brief stories – and as we will see next week – the story of the Parodical Son is a perfect picture of repentance.

In these two stories – it’s as if Jesus is saying – “Sheep and coins don’t repent – but you need to when God finds you”.

- **The Value of One**

If the shepherd was interested in one in a hundred, it makes sense that the woman would be interested in one in ten.

She does not just account the coin as lost and care nothing about it.

It is possible that this coin refers to one that would be held with several others on a silver chain worn round the head as a mark of a married woman... It was a precious ornament to the woman, and would make the loss all the more severely felt.

In a sense, the lost belong to God whether they know it or not.

C.H. Spurgeon – “The piece of silver was lost but still claimed.

Observe that the woman called the money, ‘my piece which was lost.’

When she lost its possession she did not lose her right to it; it did not become somebody else’s when it slipped out of her hand and fell upon the floor.”

God values all people and so should we – but we should have a special place in our hearts for those who do not know the Lord... It is natural for us to prize something all the more, simply because it is lost... Your keys are never so valuable to you as when you can't find them!

- **The Necessity of Light**

Palestinian houses were dark, so the woman had to light a lamp and search until she found the lost coin...

I realize we need to be careful to not press the imagery too far – but we need to understand the light of truth shining upon our dark hearts and minds is absolutely necessary in order for one to come to salvation...

The term “**light**” appears in our Bibles over 260 times. It obviously refers to literal light, but in many places it also often refers to spiritual light... God is Light – The Lord Jesus is Light – The Holy Spirit lights the understanding of the mind – The Word of God is light that shines in the darkness...

God is faithful to bring His light to bear upon your and my darkened hearts and minds to bring us to the truth and realization of our need for the Savior!

- **The Responsibility for Action**

In God’s economy, He has called us to cooperate with Him in the work of His Kingdom... God has the ability to regenerate and transform any life without any “*assistance*” from you or me... He needs no help.

But God has chosen to institute such practices as praying, preaching and one-on-one witnessing in the process of calling people to Himself... He doesn’t

“need us” – but He has called us – to participate with Him in the economy of His Kingdom... We are to actively pray for and seek to witness to those who are lost.

Just as the woman in Jesus’ story was actively sweeping and looking – so we must also constantly be on the alert to opportunities to point people to Jesus in sharing the gospel.

- **The Sincerity of Joy**

⁷ I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Warren Wiersbe said (not in notes) – “The story about the lost sheep would touch the hearts of the men and boys in the crowd, and the women and girls would appreciate the story about the coin that was lost from the wedding necklace. Jesus sought to reach everybody’s heart.”

The application is clear... There is joy in heaven when the lost are found and they come to repentance. Even though there may be no joy among the Pharisees, there is joy in heaven!

When the coin was finally found, the woman was naturally happy... In the same sense, God is happy when sinners repent – as opposed to the religious leaders who complained when the tax collectors and sinners drew near to Jesus to hear Him.

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

In fact, not only is there joy in the heart of the one who is found, there is joy in the heart of the One Who does the finding and there is joy in the hearts of all the others who have been found as well...

We don't often think of God as rejoicing, but He does!...

Isaiah 62:5b (NASB) "... As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you."

Zephaniah 3:17 (NKJV) "The Lord your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet *you* with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

Questions to consider in Community Group:

- Why do you suppose people would be attracted to Jesus? What is it about Christ that most appealed to you?
- Between Tax-collectors, Sinners, Pharisees and Scribes – who do you think would be most attracted to Christ, and why? Who would be most repelled?
- The stories Jesus told invoked a lot of emotion – from heartbreak, to desperation to exhilaration. We know that emotive appeals can be a deceptive tool of the enemy of our souls, but how much does emotion play into one coming to the knowledge of the truth?
- There were seven themes identified in Jesus' stories (reality of loss, possibility of found, necessity of repentance, value of one, necessity of light, responsibility for action, sincerity of joy). Which ones do you consider most important to understand and why? What other themes do you see?
- If God is the One Who does all of the "saving", what roll do Christians have in this process? Why, do you suppose, in God's economy, the He involves people in the process getting the gospel out? What scriptures can you cite that speak to the Christian's responsibility toward the lost?
- What do you think it means that God – Who possesses all His attributes fully at all times – would "rejoice over you"?