

The Stories Of Jesus Part 4

Lost & Found

Luke 15:1-10

Memory Verses: Luke 15:4

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Oh no; i've misplaced my Bible with my notes. Can anyone find it? I think I left it in one of the seats here in this room. It's brown. If you find it could you lift your hand and let me know? Oh, thank God you found it. I would have been lost without it.

Let me ask you something? Have you ever lost something very precious to you? What did you do? I remember one time a few years ago when our kids went into the woods behind our house to explore and have fun. An hour later Landon came in, then thirty minutes later Pierson came in, but Hudson and Vera wasn't with him. He said, they're right behind me; so I didn't think anything of it. But another 20 minutes went by and still the littles had not yet come in, so I sent Pierson and Landon back into the woods to try to find them. It was another 30 minutes before Pierce and Landon came back and told me that they can't find them. At that point I began to worry; where in the world could they be? Me, Pierce, and Landon went back into the woods screaming out their names. I went about a mile down the creek, Pierce and Landon went about a mile up the creek, but still no sign of them anywhere. I ran back up to the house and called the police and at about that time Lisa and Canaan had come home. Canaan ran to every neighbor on our street asking if they had seen her while Lisa ran back into the woods. Still nothing. That's when the worst thoughts crept into my head. What's if a bear got them, or they came across someone in the woods and they took them. What's if they got bit by a copperhead and were dying a ditch. I cried out to God, Lord please help me find my kids!

At that point one of our neighbors got into their Jeep and drove down some back roads that I didn't know existed. Almost three hours after they had gone missing, two miles from our house, our neighbor noticed a blue sword waving in the air just above the tops of the weeds. Holding that blue sword was Hudson with Vera in tow.

I have never been that scared in my life, but the moment they were returned to us I was more relieved. There is nothing worse than losing your children. There is nothing better than finding them again.

On a side note: When the dust settled I asked Vera if she was scared. She said nope, Hudson kept telling me that everything was alright and if they got hungry he would kill a rabbit and cook it for us! That's my boy!

I tell you that story because we are in a series about stories; the stories of Jesus. His stories, called parables, always took common everyday things and used them to tell a greater spiritual lesson. Lots of stories concerning seeds, weeds, leaven, and treasures.

Last week Canaan told us of the parable of the leaven of the Pharisees and how their lies, and legalism could spread and deceive large groups of people in the same way a little yeast can work its way through a large loaf of bread. Of course we must be careful not to ever be led astray by false teachers whether they promote legalism or liberalism.

Today we are looking at another set of parables from the book of Luke which speak to the idea of losing and finding something valuable. Just as I left Pierson and Landon to go search for Hudson and Vera, Jesus tells us that we should also be willing to set aside those who are already found in order to go find those who are lost. Let's read together in **Luke 15:1-10**.

I don't know who your "Each One Reach One" is or even if you have one. I pray you do and that you are making headway in that relationship. If you don't have one yet, I pray that by the end of this service you will commit to finding one. Why? Because It is clear that these parables speak directly to the idea that we are to pursue the lost with a passion a parent searches for a missing child. I pray today that you walk away from this message realizing that according to Jesus... **The Church Is Not A Social Club Meant To Keep The Saved Safe; Rather It Is A Rescue Base Where The Saved Are Sent To Find The Lost Children of God.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing that I want us to think about this morning is this... **The Saved Must Eat With Sinners**. Let's look at why Jesus felt the need to speak these two parables. Look with me again in **Luke 15:1-2**. These verses lead us to two fundamental principles which again show us the paradox of the parables.

First, Jesus isn't interested in trying to convince the pharisees that though they think they are found, they are indeed lost. They have convinced themselves that they are righteous people and the righteous do not need salvation. Do you remember when we began this series I showed you what Jesus' primary reason was for speaking in parables. For people to hear yet not understand. They are a barometer to tell true followers from false pretenders. Jesus wanted the Pharisees to hear even though he knew that they could not listen with their hearts. Their hearts were hardened and would not be changed. Jesus was done casting his pearls before these religious pigs.

On the contrary, the second fundamental principle we see here is that though Jesus wasn't interested in trying to convince the Pharisees of their worthless self-righteousness and lost state, Jesus was very interested in reaching sinners who were open to the idea that they were in need of

salvation. Even though the religious institutions of the time had already discarded them and pre-judged them as unworthy of the kingdom of God, and even though in the eyes of the pharisees, these sinners were already condemned, Jesus still pursued them. Why? Because their hearts were not hardened. They knew that they were sick and in need of the great physician to come and heal their hearts. Even though the Pharisees believed that to eat with one of those dirty sinners was a sin itself, Jesus knew that it was actually a sin to neglect eating with them. **Jesus couldn't have cared less about the Pharisees unbiblical prejudices and rules. He cared for sinners regardless.**

Which brings us to another question doesn't it? Why did Jesus care for sinners? Two reasons Jesus cares for sinners. First, he created them. Before the foundations of the world, Jesus knew them, and planned them. When the time came, he formed them in their mother's wombs. In this sense, he is their father and they are his children. How can a creator not love their creation?

Me and Lisa had no choice in the personality traits our children would have when they were born. Sometimes they are adorable and some times they drive us crazy. Sometimes they put holes in the wall with their butts, true story, and sometimes they put scratches on the brand new van, don't even get me started. But when it comes to our love for them, it matters not what they do, we will never stop loving them! Our love is unconditional because they are our children. Jesus loves sinners, because they are his!

But he also loves them because he wants to save them. Jesus knows that even though he created them and they are his children, they will not be with him in glory unless they place their faith in Him as their Lord. He wants to take his physical children and make them his spiritual children. I imagine that the thought of losing even one of them makes him very sad. And so he is willing to do whatever it takes for them to see the light and repent of their sins and follow him.

Which is where we come in. If Jesus cares for sinners, we must care for sinners too! What does it mean to be a follower of Christ if not to care for the things he cares for. Trust me, other than the glory of God, He cares for nothing more than seeing sinners come to salvation. And nothing brings God more glory than seeing sinners come to salvation. So you are not wrong to say that Jesus cares for nothing more than seeing sinners saved; than seeing the lost found. Therefore, we must care for seeing the lost found more than we care about anything else as well.

So what does it look like to care for sinners? Well, the obvious answer is that we learn to love them. But if you are like me, it is hard to love anyone you don't truly know, much less sinful strangers. It is not an easy thing to do. And, so we recognize that it is a process. You may not love sinners right now, but as your love for Christ grows, and as the Spirit

moves in you, you will grow a heart for sinners that you never knew you had. In time you will pray hours on end for sinners. In time you will weep for sinners.

But in the meantime, just serve sinners. Take time out of your busy life to pour into the lost in your life. Hang out with them at work. Send them encouraging text messages throughout the week. Be there for them in their times of needs. And yes, invite them over for dinner! Bring them into your life as to show them the love of Christ.

And of course I know the concern in doing so. What if it looks like i'm making allowances for their sin, or what if i'm influenced by them or my kids are influenced by them more than we are an influence on them? And yes, those are proper concerns which you will need to prep your family for. But make no mistake about it, we've been called to do this.. and so we must! **Stop letting the excuses cause you to sin by neglecting to begin relationships with sinners! The Church Is Not A Social Club Meant To Keep The Saved Safe; Rather It Is A Rescue Base Where The Saved Are Sent To Find The Lost Children of God.**

The second thing we need to see today through these parables is this... **The Saved Must Never Prioritize Fellowship Over Evangelism.** Let's first look at the Parable of the lost sheep. We see this in both **Luke 15:3-7, Matthew 18:10-14**. In Luke he is giving this parable concerning the pharisees and in Matthew he is giving this parable concerning little children. But in both we see the same spiritual applications. In both the 99 sheep represents those who are already found, the saved, the church, or in the case of the pharisees, those who think they are righteous. And in both cases the 1 represents the lost in need of salvation.

And, I'll just be honest with you here. I've always struggled with this passage a little bit. Shouldn't the shepherd, Jesus, be happy with 99 sheep? Why would he risk the 99 for the 1. It's not good math. If the 99 represent the saved, and the 1 represents the lost, is Jesus telling us to neglect the church for the sake of the mission? What about when we find the 1, do we just drop him off in the pen, essentially leaving him on his own, so that we can again go pursue the lost? What about discipleship? What about fellowship? What about corporate worship? I'm hoping I'm not the only one here today who has had these questions? It's not wrong to have questions.

But in my many dealings with this parable and through much study and research it is apparent that this parable is not presenting the case that we just ignore discipleship and fellowship. Far from it. All through the New Testament we see verses jam packed with teaching on fellowship, discipleship, corporate worship, and the unity of the church body.

So what exactly is Jesus saying here? He's saying that **the pursuit of sinners supersedes the need to disciple the church and fellowship with the saints.** Yes we all love being together and worshipping together and

sharing our lives together, the early church did the same. And yes, we need to be in small groups and D-groups so that we can grow in our maturity together as believers. We must never neglect intentional discipleship. But, when it comes to prioritizing the purposes of the Church, reaching the lost with the Gospel takes precedence.

What do I mean? Well let me tell you a story that has stuck with me for the last five years. If you were a part of this church five years ago, you may remember that we had a very unhealthy culture where the prevailing thought was, we take care of our own, and we are not very interested in reaching the community. I could be wrong, but I don't think I am. This thought was made clear when it came time to do the annual trunk or treat in the parking lot at our old building. I had suggested that we make it big enough to invite the entire community but that idea was shot down with this statement. "I know you care about reaching their kids, but what about our kids? Let's just focus on our kids." Make no mistake about it, I want to reach our kids too, but trust me, while our kids are in good hands already, there are plenty out there who still need Jesus. If this parable is telling us anything it is that we must be willing to risk what we have to reach those we don't.

But you say, Shevi, how could you ever risk the spiritual maturation of your church in order to focus on evangelism? That's a good question. I have a few answers. First, hopefully I've already assured you that we put a premium on discipleship and fellowship and will continue to intentionally do things to foster that here. But, secondly, I have to trust that those who are saved are secure in the hands of God. Yes we must disciple but more importantly we must trust the Holy Spirit to do the work in a maturing believer's heart that we can't. As a pastor, I am responsible for a culture of fellowship and discipleship at my church, but ultimately I must trust the Holy Spirit to work in your lives. I can't always hold your hand, but He can! And third, I believe that by training believers to share their faith and giving them opportunities to share their faith, and by constantly provoking them to share the Gospel that they will be disciplined.

The bottom line is this... I am willing to risk it for the sake of reaching the lost. We must put Evangelism and reaching people with the Gospel in our community on the front burner or we will fail at what God has primarily called us to do. We must be willing to leave the 99 here at Stone Creek in order to find the 1 in our neighborhoods, at our jobs, and in our schools. **The Church Is Not A Social Club Meant To Keep The Saved Safe; Rather It Is A Rescue Base Where The Saved Are Sent To Find The Lost Children of God.**

Application

Jesus puts a fine point on this with another similar parable about a lost coin! Look with me again at [Luke 15:8-10](#). Notice that there is great

joy when the coin is found. So much so that they can't wait to tell their friends, I found my lost coin! It's like getting that tax return that you weren't expecting it at exactly the moment you need it most. Trust me, you'd be rejoicing too. And, Jesus says that there is great rejoicing also in heaven, as the angels throw a party in the honor of the lost one who is found. I don't know about you but I'm ready to party. And so we need to be willing to leave the 99 to reach the lost.

The application is quite simple this morning. We must prioritize sharing the Gospel with the lost by means of relationships. Our primary purpose as a church must be to plan, strategize, and execute effective evangelism in our personal circles and in our community. There are plenty of lost sheep and there are plenty of lost coins that need to be found. There are legions of angels anticipating their salvation and ready to party in heaven. And most of all, Jesus longs to see every single one of them saved. If we care about the things of Christ, we must care to see the lost found!

Conclusion

In Conclusion today I want to read you a poem I found in my research. It's called; [I Met a Soul Today by Neal Pollard](#).

*A lonely soul was crying out - For someone to direct
Their mind to know the will of God - But I chose to deflect.
An edgy soul was acting out - Intimidating and coarse
Yet they were searching for the truth - I recoiled with too little remorse.
A hopeful soul was reaching out - And attended our worship service
But I was busy, too much to do - To connect, plus I was nervous.
A hurting soul, in time of loss - Crossed my path today
I felt so bad that he was grieved - But still I hurried on my way.
A lost soul was needing Christ - She is destined for eternity
I was busy, nervous, no zeal for her - Guess I was too caught up in me
The next soul that I come upon - Lord, may I try with zeal
To share your grace and teach your Word - And your matchless love reveal.*

So what is your response today. First, if you don't have an Each One Reach One yet, I pray that you would search your soul for that one person who doesn't know Christ that you can reach and adopt them today. Secondly if you do have an Each One Reach One, come pray for them at the altar. Pray for the lost to be found!