

Lost and Found

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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September 1, 2024

Text: Luke 15:1-10

Purpose: Jesus gave those gathered there a cluster of parables on things lost and found. A lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. In each of these parables, there is rejoicing once the lost was found. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Let us not become hardened Pharisees, but ones with compassion for the lost ones around us, bringing them into the family of God. Today we examine the first two parables.

Lost and Found – A Dog Named Chesney

Lost and Found – we have all experienced it. Maybe you are someone that has a tendency to lay your keys or cell phone down in different places every time you get home and before you can leave again, you have to spend several minutes hunting for them. Does that sound like you?



Maybe you are like the thousands of other people that have an umbrella but have completely forgotten where it is. I guess you don't need it unless it is raining!

Or maybe you have found something that you know is important to someone else. You occasionally hear of someone finding a long lost class ring at the beach or a lost

wedding band found in the garden years after it was lost. You sometimes hear of someone going through their family tree and discovering a long lost relative – someone you should have known about, but for various reasons you just found them.

Such great sadness when something important is lost
Such great celebration when it is found again.



Maybe you can identify with what our family experienced about ten years ago. One day, our family “found” a small Great Dane puppy. That was the day a dirty, hungry, flea infested puppy came up on our porch and Amber and Kaitlyn decided to take on the project of finding the owner of this dog. They brought the dog into the house, gave it a bath, fed it, and of course, fell in love with it! I can still hear those words echoing in my ears ... “Can we keep him PLEASE?” They even named the dog “Chesney” after the country singer, Kenny Chesney.



At the time, we already had three inside dogs, and three outside cats, the responsible thing for me to say was “NO.” So between Sharon, Amber, and Kaitlyn they began to post pictures of this lost dog on Facebook, Lost Dogs of Wilson, and several other places on the internet. After about a week, Amber found a rescue organization that was willing to take Chesney and get all of the dogs shots caught up.



About two weeks later, Amber found out that the dog was placed with a Great Dane organization. What was once lost, thrown away,

dirty, hungry, and sickly – found a home, welcomed, well groomed, well fed, and healthy.

But for the lost dog to transition from “lost-ness” to “found-ness” – it took someone with a willing, compassionate heart. Someone that was willing to open their home to a strange dog, someone willing to feed and nurture the dog, and someone that took the time to try and find where it once belonged. When the dog’s former home could not be found, there needed to be a willingness on our part to give that lost dog to someone else so it could be placed in a new home.

Lost and Found – Two Parables

Our scripture passages this morning involve two simple stories the followers of Jesus could identify with. These two parables are actually in the context of three stories related to things that are lost and after great effort, they are finally found.



The Parable of the Lost Sheep

The first parable is known as the Parable of the Lost Sheep



¹ Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³ So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

⁴ “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ ⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.



The Scribes and Pharisees



I can picture the scene in my mind. Jesus had already called the twelve disciples. He commissioned 70 people to go out preaching the kingdom of God. Thousands were coming to hear

Jesus teach, preach, and heal. He had given them the Lord’s Prayer. He had been sparring verbally with the Pharisees and scribes over the scriptures and their application. Jesus had healed on the Sabbath and because they considered that “work,” which was a violation of the laws concerning the Sabbath, it made them angry towards Jesus. He had taught about the foolishness of riches. He reminded the people that God cared for them and they did not need to live in worry or fear.

Here was Jesus walking among the people, probably along the Sea of Galilee. He wanted them to know that God was seeking lost sinners.



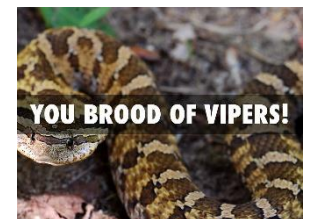
Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. In this parable, we find Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. These were the outcasts of Jewish religious society. They were the ones the Pharisees and scribes often pointed at to prove how righteous they were and how unrighteous the sinners were.

Those sinners did not follow all of the religious rules. They ate, they drank, and they lived for themselves. They did unseemly, immoral things. They lived a life the religious leaders despised. I am sure these sinners eating with Jesus were the topic of judgment. These sinners and tax collectors were the source of gossip and objects of derision.



But Jesus came to eat with them – to talk with them – to get to know them – to answer their questions – to meet their needs – to heal their sickness – to address their spiritual need – to forgive them of their sins – and to welcome them into the kingdom of God.

Sure, the Scribes and Pharisees have followed the letter of the law. But they forgot the kingdom of God is open to all who repent and receive God’s Son as their Savior. The scribes and Pharisees actually kept the letter of the law but missed the spirit of the law and as a result were actually judged and John the Baptist called them a “brood of vipers.” Those that should have known better were actually a hindrance to the growth of the kingdom of God.

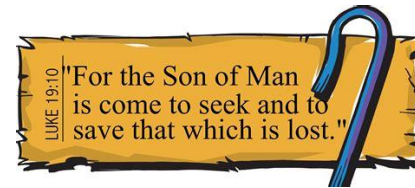


The same is true today. In many churches today you will find faithful people who attend every time the doors are opened. They attend all the meetings, they do many of the things in the church, they attend every worship service, they attend Sunday school, and they come on Wednesday nights. They are the backbone of the organized church. But with that kind of dedication, sometimes comes a Pharisee spirit – a spirit of condemnation, an attitude of judgment, a critical spirit, or a cutting word.



That is not something that happens in just a few churches. It happens in all churches and it happens here as well. I want to encourage our faithful members to examine your hearts and see if they have adopted a Pharisee spirit. Words have been said to others in this church that cut and hurt. That look of judgment has been passed upon others. Over the years, I have had conversations with people who don't come to this church anymore because of what was said to them.

If only the Pharisee could see what others see, they would change. Jesus challenged the Pharisees time and time again, but most of them did not change. Some did, while others did not. And the thing they wanted the most – salvation and a relationship with God – was actually denied to them. They closed off their hearts and would not let the mind and Spirit of Christ dwell in them richly. They allowed the petty judgment and snide accusations to permeate their spirits.



Jesus came to seek and save the lost – those outside the church, and those inside the church. We are ALL lost sinners in need of a Savior.

The blatant sinner caught up in the most despicable sins, and the secret sinner sitting in the pew.

Those of us that grew up in the church have this idea that in some small way God doesn't forgive all sinners. We have this idea that God will not forgive a bank robber, a drug user, an alcoholic, a thief, a murderer, or a rapist. In some small way we have drawn a line in the sand that some sins are beyond God's mercy and grace. I am here to tell you that God's mercy and grace is available for ALL sinners, no matter the sin, to those that repent (turn from that sin) and confess Jesus Christ as their Savior. There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved.



There is not a plan "B" in God's plan of salvation. It is by the way of the cross – or none! It is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ – or none! There is only one way to salvation and that is through Jesus Christ.

The parable of the lost sheep is a story for all of us.

All of us are lost and separated from God because of our sin. Our sins separate us from God and place us on a path of judgment and hell. All of us start out on that path. The ones that turn to Jesus Christ and enter into the narrow path are the ones that will receive eternal life.

All of us that believe in Jesus Christ today are a part of the 99 sheep. We are in the fold and we are secure. But Jesus is saying that the one that is missing is of infinite value and worth. The one that is missing is worth going after.

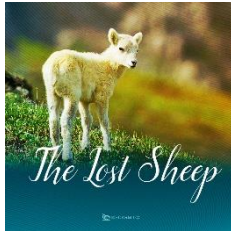
**THE NEEDS OF THE ONE
OUTWEIGH THE NEEDS
OF THE MANY**

JAMES KIRK
PICTUREQUOTES.COM

From an economic perspective it is not worth risking the 99 to go after the one. Yet Captain Kirk once said to Spock, “Sometimes the needs of the one outweigh the needs of the many.” Why leave the 99 in the wilderness to seek the one that is missing? Why put at risk what is sure, to go after that one that is lost, hungry, thirsty, dirty, and maybe even sick.

But from God’s perspective, it is worth it all to go after the lost ones.

If God cares so much about the one
Shouldn’t you and I?



Shouldn’t we have a heart of love for the one that comes into our fellowship to worship? Shouldn’t we see each person as someone of infinite worth and worthy of giving our love, nurture and attention?



Then why do we heap criticism and judgment on others? Why do we make comments about their absence? Why do we judge others motives for coming?

When we as the 99 faithful ones do that – all we are saying to that one person is they are not as righteous as we are – they are an outcast.

The 99 need an attitude adjustment if they are ever to act like the Body of Christ to the lost and dying world. The 99 need to care for the one that the Shepherd brings into the fold. If we don’t care for the one, then they will be out there again, lost and dejected once more.



I love the picture of the Shepherd going out into the far corners of the wilderness to find this lost one. He calls out to the lost sheep. He searches the landscape to catch a glimpse of where they may be. He looks in holes in the ground to see if the lost sheep has fallen in. He searches the green pastures to see if they are there hidden in the tall grass. He doesn’t stop till the lost one is found.

When the Shepherd finds the lost one, He cares so much for that one that He places the dirty, hungry, flea infested, sickly sheep on his shoulders and brings him to a home where he can be taken care of. If the Lord brings people into our midst it is because they need nurture and care and we are responsible for taking care of them. Not running them off because they are not like us, but welcoming them because the Shepherd sent them to us. If the Shepherd has sent them to us, then maybe we need them in our fellowship to help us to be the Body of Christ we are supposed to be.

The hymn, *We are Called to Be God’s People* says;
We are called to be God’s people, showing by our lives His grace.
One in heart and one in spirit, sign of hope for all the race.
Let us show how He has changed us, and remade us as His own,
Let us share our life together, as we shall around His throne.

The Joy of Heaven

We need to hear the words of this parable once again, *“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”*



Why do you think that is true? Why do you think Heaven rejoices over one sinner repenting? It is because one more person has come into the Family of God. They once were outside – facing judgment – but now they are saved.



Don't you celebrate when a new child comes into your family? The other members of your family that are already here are still just as important as this new child. But there is

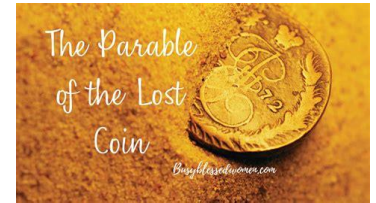
something special that happens when a new baby comes along. Pictures are made, photos are posted everywhere. You are overjoyed at the birth of a new child.

The same should be true for the family of God. We should celebrate when someone comes to the Lord and is “born again.” It is the second birth that matters more than the first birth. The first earthly birth makes us a part of the human family. The second spiritual birth makes us part of the family of God. Jesus told Nicodemus *“You must be born again.”* Until you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God.



The Parable of the Lost Coin

There is a second parable in our passage of scripture this morning. It is the parable of the Lost Coin.



⁸ *“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ ¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*



In this parable it is not the Shepherd that is searching for something lost, it is an ordinary person searching for something important to her.

She has lost a coin probably worth one day's wages. It may not be worth a whole lot of money but it was important to her. Imagine her life savings was worth ten days wages. She needed that to meet her needs. We don't know what happened to that coin, the scripture didn't say. It simply was gone.

The woman took great effort to look for it until it was found. She turned on the lights, searched high and low. She examined all the places it could be hidden. She took time to cleanup in hopes of finding what was lost. I know I have done the same thing when I was looking for something lost. I start cleaning up and putting things back where they belong in hopes of turning up what I had lost. The older I

get, the more time I seem to be spending searching for something I have misplaced.



The woman found her coin and called all her friends to celebrate with her. It was important that this coin be found. I have read these ten coins could have been a part of a woman's headpiece that was used for a wedding celebration. To lose such a coin like that would have been heartbreaking.

This woman obviously cared about this lost coin. If she didn't care about finding the lost coin, would she have searched for it? No. If it was a penny do you think she would have taken the time to search that much for it? Probably not. But this coin was valuable to her.

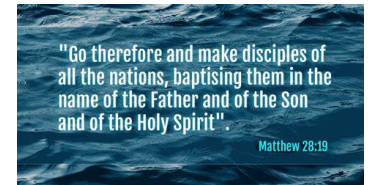
There is a whole community of people in Kinston that are lost and if they do not receive Jesus Christ as their Savior, they will be eternally lost. If you and I do not value them as important to the Kingdom of God, we will not go and seek them out. If you and I don't care if they die and go to hell, then we will never go visit them and tell them about Jesus Christ. It is so important that a lost sinner be saved that when they are, all of heaven rejoices.



1
Lord, Thy church on earth is seeking
Thy renewal from above;
teach us all the art of speaking
with the accent of Thy love.
We would heed Thy great commission:
go now into every place—
preach, baptise, fulfil my mission,
serve with love and share my grace.

It is important to God that lost sinners be saved. It was so important to God that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ to redeem those that are lost by laying down His life.

It was so important to Jesus Christ that lost sinners be found that in the Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ, the last marching orders given to Jesus' disciples, as given to us in Matthew 28 says,



¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

If we are to be the people of God that God intends, we need to have a heart of compassion for all people and extend kindness and welcome them.

If we are to be the people of God that Jesus Christ intends, we need to do as He commanded, "Go, Make Disciples, Baptizing, and Teaching" until He comes and takes His church to be with Him.

If we are to be the people of God that the Holy Spirit desires, we need to have His Spirit ruling and reigning in our hearts to accomplish His will for our lives and our community.

Hugh Sherlock was the chairman of the Jamaica Methodist District. In 1960 he wrote the "theme hymn" designating that year as the "Year of Renewal." He experienced working in the depressed areas of West Kingston, Jamaica. He is also credited with co-writing the Jamaican National

Anthem in 1961. The hymn written by him for the year of renewal was called,

Lord, Thy Church on Earth is Seeking (Hymn 391)

(by Hugh Sherlock 1905-1998)

Lord, thy church on earth is seeking, thy renewal from above;
Teach us the art of speaking, with the accent of Thy love.
We would heed Thy great commissions: "Go ye into every place;
Preach, baptize, fulfill My mission, serve with love and share My
grace."

Freedom, give to those in bondage, lift the burdens caused by sin;
Give new hope, new strength and courage, grant release from fears
within.
Light for darkness, joy for sorrow; love for hatred, peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow as the Spirit gives new life.

In the streets of every city, where the bruised and lonely dwell,
We shall show the Savior's pity, we shall of His mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races, we shall serve and seek to bring,
All the world to render praises, Christ, to Thee, Redeemer, King.



This past week I met with the leadership of the Collective Church. We discussed their vision, passion, and love for the lost people of Kinston. We discussed the

history of Spilman and its our desire this church building to be used to help build up the Kingdom of God. I am so glad Spilman has agreed to partner with them and help provide a place for some of their ministry to thrive. We of little strength can be encouraged, there is another generation ready to take on the mantle of ministry to reach the lost in our community. Teaching, baptizing, and multiplying the Kingdom. I have been praying the Lord would give us a

vision for the task at hand. The Lord has provided us a partnership opportunity to do the work He is calling us to do. I believe this will be a partnership we will be proud of as the people of this community and Kinston are reached by the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today, Labor Day Sunday, the Collective Church has canceled their worship services in order to serve the community of Kinston in the name of Jesus Christ. They are seeking those that are lost in need of a Savior. May we that are a part of the 99, pray for their work among us in Kinston.

Only when eternity is completed, will we understand the kingdom impact our decision to partner with the Collective Church will have.

LET US PRAY

Lord, give us your church here at Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, a heart of compassion for others that are lost, alone, hungry, and sin-prone. Lord, give us Your church, a heart of love and not judgment towards others.

Lord, till you call us home, give us Your love for the lost to welcome them into a fellowship where they can grow and be nurtured; where they can be baptized, discipled, nurtured, and taught.

Lord as we prepare to make this, Your church building, a place for other ministries to thrive and grow, prepare our hearts to be open to new and innovative ways to expand the Kingdom of God.
Amen.