Lost and Found[1]

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
November 8, 2026

Text: Luke 15:1-10, Matthew 9:35-38

Purpose: Without Christ there is no pardon for sin, no peace, no power, no purpose, and no promise. But with Christ there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that comes to the Lord.



Two friends were talking about how their day was going. One person said, "My therapist told me the way to achieve true inner peace is to finish what I start.

So far today, I have finished two bags of chips and a slice of chocolate cake. I feel better already!"[2]



Over the past few weeks, we have been examining the life of Jesus from the book of Luke. Last week we examined the five characteristics, or marks of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. A true disciple of Jesus Christ will put his relationship with God first, even above his family. A true disciple will deny himself, take up his cross and follow Jesus Christ. A true disciple counts the cost and moves forward with the commitment to follow Christ at all cost. A true disciple has a heart of surrender and obedience to God. A true disciple remains pure in their

actions and deeds so they can be the influence for Christ to a lost and dying world.



Over the years, people have asked me if there was anything going on with me because of my passion or intensity in preaching or prayer. I must admit as I work through the passages of scripture each week, and read and meditate upon what it is calling me and other followers of Jesus Christ to be and do, I find myself coming up short. Pastors are people too. I must admit there are times I do not put Christ first above my family. I do not take up the cross of Jesus Christ to the point of dying for my faith. I do not surrender all to Jesus all the time. I do not remain pure. If you were honest with yourself, and claim to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, you would have to admit you too fall short of the clear commands for Jesus' disciples.

If no one else is moved by my sermons, I am glad it moves me to bow my knee and surrender myself once again to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If no one else grasps the call of Christ, I am glad He is still speaking to me.



The world we live in is dramatically changing. We hear pundits saying change is coming and we need to be prepared. Others bemoan our political situation, our economic situation, and many preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ speak of our spiritual condition. We need to be prepared financially, socially, as well as spiritually. The world around us is a sea of lostness. At every turn, people are walking around blind and directionless. Thank God for Jesus Christ. Those that know Him have hope for today as well as for tomorrow.



You may have heard a story of a man who got off a main road and became lost on some unfamiliar back roads. Seeing a man along the road, he stopped and asked for directions. The man did not appear to be too bright. The driver asked about directions to a certain place, but the man said he did not know how to get there. He asked about another place, and got the same answer.

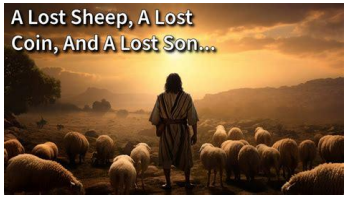
With disgust the driver said, "You just don't know anything, do you?"

The man responded, "I may not know anything, but I ain't lost."

It can be a terrifying and dangerous thing to be lost, in a car, a boat, an airplane, or in the woods. It is far more consequential, however, for a person to be lost spiritually.



Jesus set forth his primary mission in saying (Luke 19:10): *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* It is essential for us to know Jesus' primary ministry, because **what He put first should be what we put first.** Jesus was speaking of lost humanity, of people unaware of their lostness, people who are not in the family of God or committed to the person and will of Jesus Christ.



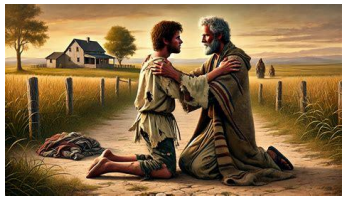
Jesus gave a classic picture of lostness (Luke 15:1-32), by telling us a story of a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. The sheep was lost because it was the victim of unintentional carelessness. The coin was lost because of a person's mistake. The son was lost because of his own rebellion and rejection. But all three were lost; the sheep to nurture and safety, the coin to usefulness, and the son to companionship and service.

So serious was the losing of all three that an anxious and persistent search was made to find them. So serious was their lostness that their being found brought about great rejoicing.



When the sheep was found Jesus said, *"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance..."*

When the coin was found, the woman: *" ... calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost'..."*



When the son was found, the father said: *"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."*



There is the real danger in our secularized society that people will not realize that they are lost. In addition, there is the danger that even Christian people may look at the outward appearance of people and forget that those who are not disciples of Jesus are spiritually lost. We may forget how radically different the true condition and expectation of the Christian and non-Christian.

Jesus emphasized that contrast as being the difference between a sheep safely in the fold and one straying and at the mercy of predators, between a coin in the hand and one lost in the dirt, and the difference between a son at home who is happy and in communion with his father and a son that is away from home in rebellion and sin.

We may forget the difference between those lost and those not lost, but Jesus knew the difference and sought for the lost, wept over the lost, prayed for the lost, and died for the lost.



Sharon and I had the opportunity to visit the church and grave of John Newton in Great Britan. In the hymn, *Amazing Grace*, this one-time slave trader, said:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
was blind, but now I see.

For a few moments this morning, I want to point out five things which characterize the lost. Ray K. Hodge noted in a sermon on this passage of scripture those that don't have Christ have no pardon, no peace, no power, no sufficient purpose, and no promise.

I. THE LOST HAVE NO PARDON

I want you to think about all the times you may have had some kind of sore, rash, cut or abrasion on your body. Just suppose that all of those ugly blemishes were unhealed and were still showing. If you had survived at all, your condition would be too painful to tolerate and you may be embarrassed to come out in public. We are grateful for the medical care and the healing properties in our bodies that have made most of those things heal and disappear.



For a moment, compare that with the sins in our lives. Just imagine if every sin that we have ever committed, every rebellion in our hearts toward God, and every bad thought which has come to our minds were pinned on the outside of our clothes and they were visible for all to see – still sitting there unforgiven. We would be burdened and overcome with condemnation and guilt before God.



This is the plight of the unsaved person, for indeed every sin of his life is still upon him if he has not received and known the forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus said (John 3:18), *"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God...,"* and (John 3:36), *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

What a terrible and unnecessary way to go through life, carrying the heavy burden of one's personal sin. For you see, a lost person has no pardon.



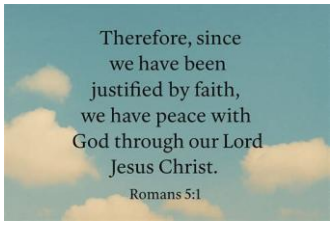
II. THE LOST HAVE NO PEACE.

People may make efforts in an attempt to fool themselves and others, to appear as if they are happy. But a person who has peace cannot hide it and one who has not found peace with God cannot successfully fake it. I am sure you have heard the phrase, "I am laughing on the outside, but I am crying on the inside."



The lost person has no peace with himself. His inner life is marked by turmoil. They are like a storm-tossed sea, churned by the winds. Only Christ can say to those waters, *"Peace be still."*

The lost person has no peace with God. When we come into the company of someone we don't like, it makes us uncomfortable to be in their presence. We cannot have peace with God or be in fellowship with Him if there is willful sin in our lives.

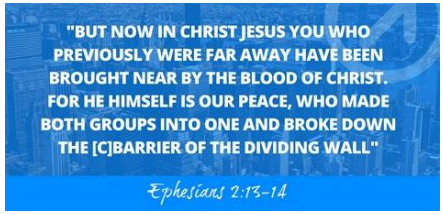


Isaiah said (48:22), *"There is no peace," saith the Lord, unto the wicked."* Peace can come when the

barrier of sin is removed by our trusting Christ as Savior and surrendering to His will for our lives. Paul wrote (Romans 5:1), "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

The lost person has no peace with others. If a person cannot have peace in his own life and peace with God, it is unlikely that he can have much peace with other people.

Deep inner peace is a rare possession. There is no hope of having this kind of peace apart from Jesus Christ, who is the epitome and the source of peace. By being the Redeemer and the Intercessor He has gone between the two contending factions, us and God, and made it possible for reconciliation.



Paul spoke of the overcoming of this alienation (Ephesians 2:13-15) in saying, *"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace..."*

Jesus left us His peace, saying, saying (John 14:27), *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."*



The Last Will and Testament people make can and are often broken in the courts. But Jesus left His followers something far more valuable than material possessions. If He had left us property or money, these things could have been stolen or seized by legal or illegal means. But Jesus left us His peace, something which is free from legal or illegal maneuvering.

III. THE LOST HAVE NO POWER.



We have been told that the sun is the source of energy. This is only partly correct, because God is the source of all energy and power, and this power is resident in Jesus the Son and His power. A New Testament word for "power" is the same root word from which we get "dynamite." It is referring to great, forceful power.

The unsaved person does not have this kind of power, which is essential as a resource for life's needs.



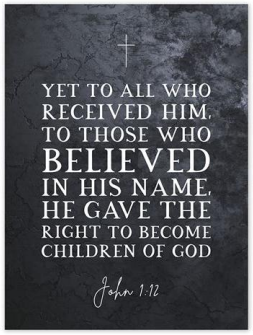
Paul said (Romans 1:16), *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the **power** of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."*

For anyone to try to live apart from God and in his own power, is as futile as for an electric motor to try to run without electrical current, an automobile to run without fuel, or a human body trying to survive without food.

We have no power except that which God gives to us, and we cannot know the kind of power He intends for us until we find that power in Jesus Christ.

Mankind lives by power of one sort or another. It is more than simply electrical power. Some people use **animal power**, or brute strength to get their way in the world. Some use **mental power**, whereby their desires are achieved through being more knowledgeable about things or by outsmarting someone. Others may use **financial power**, which can enable people to dominate others with their financial resources or by paying others to get the things they want. There are many who use **political power**, which enables them to achieve their objectives by manipulation.

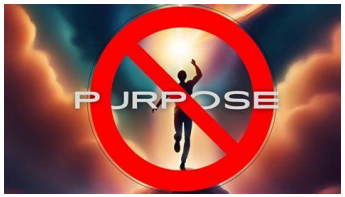
A higher power is the **power of love**, which can influence and change people inwardly, so that they will respond because they want to do so. And beyond the power of love, the power of the Holy Spirit can indwell the Christian believer and provide power to see and do the will of God.



Jesus said (John 1:12), *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name..."* Just think about the resources of God which are available to the children of God, those who are the heirs of God and the joint-heirs with Christ. But a person must be a child of God to have access to these resources.

An unsaved person does not have sufficient power to overcome temptation, sin, guilt, anxiety, grief, and death.

IV. THE LOST HAVE NO SUFFICIENT PURPOSE.



Everyone has some kind of purpose. People drive themselves relentlessly to achieve some kind of objective, such as making money, seeking fame, or the building of their own little empire. Until a person allows Jesus Christ to be at the center of their life they cannot have a sufficient purpose in the sight of God.

Everything God created has a purpose. The bee serves its purpose, as do bats, buzzards, snakes, earthworms, lightning, air, water, and sunlight. These things would be useless if they were not doing what they were created to do. A buzzard would be useless to pollinate plants or to collect honey, while a bee would do poorly as a scavenger or as a source of food.

Man-made things also have a purpose. Each item is made to do a certain purpose. When you attempt to use it in a way it was not intended, it often spells disaster. We may try to use a screwdriver as a hammer but it simply doesn't work well.



But human beings are the highest of God's creation. It is ironic that a person might think that they know better how to use their life than their Creator does. God has a purpose for all of us, and we will not be happy and most useful until we do His will for our lives.



Years ago, there was a picture in *Life Magazine* showing a gadget a man made by using up a lot of spare parts left over from old clocks. He spent over 800 hours in assembling hundreds of wheels, axles, gears, chain drives, and belts. The various parts meshed, or were connected together, so that a small electric motor caused them to interact and turn. The caption under the picture read, "And what does it do? Absolutely nothing! It just turns!"

Many people in the world, just like this gadget, are running from one place to another, just turning, but doing little or nothing for any lasting good. A person who has not given their life back to God through faith in Jesus Christ cannot find the highest purpose God has for him. The ultimate purpose is in giving our life to Christ and serving His purpose in the world.

V. THE LOST HAVE NO PROMISE.



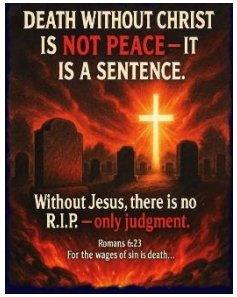
Some of us have heard and sung a little chorus, which goes,

> Every promise in the book is mine
> Every chapter, every verse, every line,
> All the blessings of His love divine,
> Every promise in the book is mine.



The Bible is filled with promises for Christian believers. There is immeasurable comfort in Jesus' words.

(Matthew 11:28), *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...,"*
(Matthew 28:20), *"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen...,"*
(John 14:2), *"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you...,"*
(John 3:16), *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*



The person without Christ as their personal Savior has none of the promises for **pardon**, for **peace**, for **power**, for **purpose**, or for eternal life and the future. **The only promise an unsaved person can claim is judgment. They cannot claim the promises of Christ to His children.**

Many of the people we meet every day, people on every social, financial, and educational level, are people without these promises. If they don't have Christ, they are on the broad way to destruction, without any realistic or ultimate hope. This may be why so many people turn to alcohol, to drugs, to immorality, to crime, and even to suicide. They have done so because their lives are so empty without Christ and the meaning and fulfillment which He alone can provide.

Apart from Christ, life is grim and without hope.



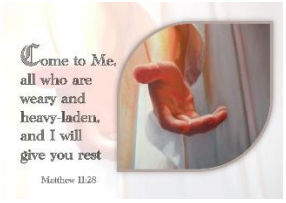
But there is good news. With Christ, there can be pardon, peace, power, purpose, and a promise. We can have **pardon** if we ask. Isaiah 55:7 says, *"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."*

We can have **peace**, for Jesus said, *"My peace I leave with you."*

We can have **power**, for Jesus said, *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name..."*

We can have **purpose** in doing God's will, for Jesus said, *"My will is to do the will of Him who sent me."*

We can have **promise**, for Jesus said in John 5:24, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."*



Jesus came to *"... seek and to save that which was lost."* In His love He seeks out the lost and invites them to come in repentance and faith to receive his forgiveness and salvation. Jesus said, (Matthew 11:28) *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."*

If you have never publicly accepted Jesus as your Savior, today can be the day you stand up and claim Jesus Christ as your Savior. We are sinners in need of a Savior. Our neighbor is a sinner in need of a Savior. The person down the street is a sinner in need of a Savior. There are students in our schools that are walking in darkness in need of the Savior.

If we don't tell them, they will never hear. If we don't respond how dark our lives, our neighbor's lives, our communities' lives will be.

Don't delay, respond today.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

[1] Outline from Ray K. Hodge sermon on "Lostness"

[2] Mickey's Funnies, A Peace Funny, Oct. 29, 2026