

Message Summary

Have you ever lost something valuable? When we lose keys, wallets, and especially children, we search until we diligently find them. It puts us in an anxious, worried state, where we forget about everything else around us. But oh, the joy we have in finally finding that lost item or person! Jesus' parable makes clear that such joy is not only a human experience. God has immense joy when one of His lost children is found. He uses us as means to "seek and save the lost" (Lk. 19:10).

The world – Jesus' and ours – is filled with all types of sinners. Some sinners are "low class," the scandalous and wild sinners analogous to the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32). Other sinners are "high class" or even "religious class" sinners whose religious actions and knowledge seem upright and impressive to everyone. Everyone, that is, except God, who sees their corrupt, greedy, and extortionist hearts. Our story opens (Lk. 15:1-2) with these "religious class" sinners, the Pharisees and lawyers, drawing near to Jesus to listen. As they do, they took issue with Jesus eating with "low class" sinners, the wayward and callous sinners the Pharisees viewed themselves as above.

Jesus tells two parables to awaken their hearts to truth. The first (15:3-7) concerns a flock of one hundred sheep, immense value in Jesus' time. One wanders away. The wondering sheep (representing a sinner), dumb and weak, has no way to return to the flock without the shepherd (representing God) pursuing them. Romans 3:10-12 showcases this truth about our sin: "*None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside...*" The world is dangerous for lost sheep. Without the loving care of its shepherd, the sheep cannot enjoy still pastures and water (cf. Ps. 23), and is subject to dangerous wolves (cf. Mt. 7:15; Lk. 10:3; Jn. 10:1-18; Acts 20:29). This shepherd pursues that lost sheep, puts it on his shoulders, and brings it back. The shepherd calls friends and neighbors to celebrate the return of this lost sheep, over which the shepherd has more joy than the ninety-nine remaining sheep (representing the "religious class" sinners who denied their need for repentance).

The second parable (15:8-10) involves a woman with ten valuable silver coins (we can think of as \$100 bills) who loses one. Though certainly thankful for the nine remaining, that woman lights a lamp, sweeps her house, and diligently searches until she finds her lost coin. In her joy over the recovered coin, she invites her friends to celebrate with her. The parable closes with a picture of God – the One "before the angels" – joyfully celebrating a sinner's repentance, and an invitation for us to share in the same by joyfully pursuing sinners around us to be part of God's kingdom.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why is the natural tendency of the human heart to look inward? Why does being used as God's instruments to seek and save the lost bring far greater joy than our selfish hearts?

Where else in the Bible portrays God as pursuing hopeless rebels (see esp. Gen. 3:8-13; Ex. 2:23-25; 3:7-10; Deut. 30:4-10; Lk. 10:40-48)? Why are sheep and coins apt illustrations of us as sinners?

If every other religion relies on "self-salvation," what distinguishes Christianity? Why is Pharisaical self-righteousness antithetical to Christ's gospel?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. How can you be more intentional this week to imitate God in pursuing sinners (of whatever type) around you to “*seek and save the lost*” (Lk. 19:10).
2. Does your anxiety and frantic searching for worldly things reveal you value them over people around you? How can you give greater priority to the lost?
3. Like the Pharisees, do you tend to justify or downplay the sins of your own “religious class” and look down on “low class” sinners, or vice versa? Are you prone to think of your own sins as lesser and theirs as greater?
4. Are you faithful to “exegete” (study in detail) both the Scriptures and the people around you? In what ways could this bolster your gospel proclamation this week?
5. Are you turned inward to yourself, your own family, and your own comforts in a way that gives no thought to the tax collectors and sinners around you?
6. Is your greatest desire for your children to hear that they “*are walking in the truth*” (3 John 1:4), or are you prone to value their education, safety, marriage, and career more than their soul?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for pursuing us as sinners and lifting us up as lost sheep and coins, to bring us back to Himself
 - Thank the Lord for faithful mothers who find their greatest joy in children walking in the truth (3 Jn. 1:4). Pray that the Lord would raise up many more mothers and children from our church, in familial and spiritual relationships, to glorify God and reach the nations for Him.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray that the Lord would protect our church's hearts from the natural tendency of the human heart to turn inward and value our comfort over people around us.
 - Pray for Christ Fellowship's Memorial Day cookout (May 28), that it would be an enjoyable time of fellowship but also opportunity to invite many.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for Buddhists in Thailand, that they found see the futility of seeking spiritual renewal apart from Christ, and that many workers would enter this vast harvest field (see <https://www.imb.org/> for more information on this and other people groups).