

Teaching Outline

Lesson # 5 – The Lost Things

Luke 15

Principle Truth: Things that are lost to man are never hidden from God.

Lesson Outline

I. Jesus' Focus: "Those People"

Jesus' parables reveal the compassionate heart of the Father toward the Lost – whether Lost in religious ritual or lost to worldly culture.

II. Jesus' Story# 1

- A. The Lost Sheep
- B. The Shepherd's Response

III. Jesus' Story # 2

- A. The Lost Coin
- B. The Woman's Response
 - a. Light the Lamp
 - b. Sweep the House
 - c. Search Diligently

IV. Jesus Left and So Must We!

- A. We leave because God saved us to send us!
- B. We leave because the gospel saves the lost and unreached!
- C. We leave because the gospel saves us from ourselves!
- D. We leave because so few do!

Lesson #5
Series 3 - Story 6

The Lost Things
Luke 15:1-10

**LIKE JESUS WE MUST HAVE COMPASSION FOR THE LOST AND SHARE
HIS LOVE AND TRUTH WITH THEM.**

Story Outline:

- I. Pride of Pharisees
- II. Parable of the Lost Sheep
- III. Parable of the Lost Coin

Life Application Principles:

1. The sin of pride keeps one from showing compassion for the lost.
2. We must examine our own hearts for the sin of pride and prejudice before we can be moved by God to seek the lost.
3. Those whom man considers worthless, God sees as having great value.
4. Without Christ we are all lost and deprived.
5. The posture of a Pharisee always points to self, while the posture of a genuine follower always points to Christ.
6. We must leave the safe and comfortable place to seek the lost.
7. Living for the moment may seem harmless, but in the end this way of life causes one to wander far from God.
8. Living for God is an intentional choice that must be made moment by moment.
9. Repentance is the door through which we all must walk to receive God's grace and mercy.
10. The greatest work to which a believer is called is partnership with God in the salvation of the lost.
11. One is in danger and vulnerable when wandering from God.
12. To find the lost, we must have the light of the Scriptures.
13. No one gets to heaven on the merit of another, but must have his own personal relationship with God.
14. Things that are lost to man are never hidden from God.
15. Transparency and openness are essential in reaching and connecting with the lost.
16. We must be careful not to allow our busyness to deter us from devoting time to those who need our witness.

NAME OF JESUS

Devotional Reading

“JESUS, the GOOD SHEPHERD”

(Read slowly, taking a moment to allow each verse to settle in your mind and take root your heart.)

*The Lord is my Shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul.
He leads in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.
Even though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
In the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
Forever.
(Psalm 23, ESV)*

Apart from John 3:16, this passage of scripture is probably the most memorized, quoted and well known among any other in the entire Bible. Even unbelievers are familiar with parts of this passage and have been known to turn to it in times of great trouble and life-threatening distress. Overflowing in imagery, its message is pregnant with hope bringing comfort and encouragement to the weary and the weak, the fearful and the tried, the lost and the longing, the anxious and the tired, the sick and the dying, the grieving and the hurting. Every word of this Psalm, carefully chosen by God and given to David, is purposeful and so rich with meaning that I believe we will never fully grasp the grandeur of it until we meet the Lord our **SHEPHERD** face to face in glory. When woven together, the words of this Psalm, like a beautiful tapestry of many colorful threads,

create an extremely powerful and all-encompassing picture of the Lord Jesus Christ that magnifies His eternality, His provision, His compassion, His strength, His comfort, His justice, and His tender loving care towards His children. As such, it is no wonder that it is one of the most cherished and recited portions of God's Holy Word.

Written in the present tense, this Psalm of David is a timeless reminder to all God's children that Jesus, His Son, who is the **GREAT and GOOD SHEPHERD** of His people, is always near and intimately acquainted with each and every one of us. Because of His eternality and compassion towards us, we are never alone or ever forgotten. One needs to only read the opening verse to see this is truth. "*The Lord IS*" . . . not was, nor may be, nor will be, but **IS** . . . now and forever . . . "**MY SHEPHERD**" . . . mine. Thus, wherever I am and wherever I go, He **IS** there also. Not one situation or experience of mine is beyond His knowledge, outside of His control or above His power to help me through. Jesus is **MY SHEPHERD**; therefore, I can trust with all my heart that He will safely and victoriously guide me through every hill and every valley I encounter every moment of every day of my life. Can you confidently say the same? Is He also *your SHEPHERD*? Do you trust Him with all your heart for every concern of your life?

In His eyewitness account of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ's time on earth, John records Jesus' own words about Himself as our Shepherd:

"The sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out. When He has brought out all His own, He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice." (John 10:3-4)

"I am the Door (of the sheep). If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9)

*"I am the **GOOD SHEPHERD**. The **GOOD SHEPHERD** sacrifices His life for the sheep."* (John 10:11)

*"I am the **GOOD SHEPHERD**. I know My own and they know me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."* (John 10:14-15)

To gain a bit of understanding into who Jesus is and what He does as our **GOOD SHEPHERD**, it is profitable to know a bit about the business of shepherding and the nature of sheep. Shepherding is hard work. It requires constant attention and devotion to the sheep. Therefore, the shepherd must always be awake, watching and alert to the potentially dangerous factors and forces in the surrounding environment that could harm, and even destroy, the sheep. Because sheep are utterly defenseless, they are totally dependent on their shepherd to protect them which often means putting his life on the line

for their well-being. Because they are not the brightest of animals, sheep have strong tendencies to become distracted and wander off from the fold, making themselves vulnerable to predators and all sorts of dangers. Lost in the beauty of the green pasture, they may get too close to the edge of a cliff and fall to their death; by not paying attention to their master, they may wander too far from the fold and be snatched away and stolen by evil men; or in the dark of the night if left unattended, they may be attacked and devoured by wolves. Are you wandering or lost? Have you taken your eyes and ears off of the **GOOD SHEPHERD**, and turned your attention to other “leaders” listening to the voices of evil men? Have you set your gaze on worldly things and pleasures that leave you vulnerable to attack or untimely death? Beware: there is danger in listening to and following a voice other than that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christian devotional author Chris Tiegreen writes, “When David wrote that the Lord was his **SHEPHERD**, he was making a profound statement about the Lord’s watchful eye over His people and His attentiveness to their needs. When the prophets wrote of shepherds who misled God’s people, they were issuing strong indictments against neglectful and dangerous leaders. And when Jesus compared a shepherd’s desire to leave ninety-nine safe sheep behind to go after one that was lost, He was painting a powerful picture of the heart of heaven toward those who have strayed. So, when Jesus identified Himself as the **GOOD SHEPHERD** who sacrifices His life for the sheep, He took shepherding characteristics to their ultimate extreme to assure His followers that they were under the best of care.” Whose care are you under today? Is it sufficient to save you? Be encouraged: those who are under the care of the **GOOD SHEPHERD** are always safe and secure.

I love how Charles Spurgeon explains who Jesus is and what He does as our **GOOD SHEPHERD**. “Jesus stands in the same relationship to His people as a shepherd to his flock. He owns His people; every one of them belongs to Him. He prizes them because they are His—sets value over them. He takes care of them, remembering them night and day. His heart is never off them, and because of His inward love, there is an outward goodness that He constantly extends to them. He protects them from the wolf. He guards them from a thousand dangers. He supplies all their needs. He guides them in the right way. He brings them back when they wander. He strengthens them when they are weak. He carries them when they are too feeble to go on. He sees that they are a weak, silly flock, and a wandering flock; therefore, He is their strength, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all. Thus, the children of God are safe [in the arms of the Shepherd], not only because of the life they receive but because of the dangers that are averted. They are in His hand—that is, in His possession. He grasps them as a man holds on to an object saying ‘it is mine.’ No one can take them away from His protection.” Have you ever thought of how Jesus, the **GOOD SHEPHERD** holds on to His sheep? It is no light grip,

He *grasps* us! Thus, there is no chance of His children slipping away. He *grasps* us! He takes a firm hold of us, clasping us with His powerful hand, wrapping His fingers around us so tightly that nothing can rip us out of His mighty grip. EVER! Are you safe and secure in the grasp of the **GOOD SHEPHERD**? Are you nestled deeply in His hand so that nothing and no one can harm you? Be confident: IN the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ all is well.

Little lamb, is the Lord *your Shepherd*? Is He the guiding voice not only in your mind, but also in your heart leading you through your daily cares? Do not let the sun set today if you are not in the sheepfold of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether you have slowly wandered away or never once even entered in, pray to the **GOOD SHEPHERD** and ask Him to help you find your way back to Him. Ask Him to open your ears so that you may clearly hear and discern His voice from all others. Then follow Him and Him alone, all the way to the safety of His sheep pen where you will find help, hope, protection, comfort, rest, joy and peace forevermore.

“I Myself will be the shepherd of My sheep. I will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy.” (Ezekiel 34:15-16)

THE DOCTRINE “LOSTNESS”

The Terrifying State of Lostness

Being lost is a terrifying experience. Whether it’s getting lost on a mountain wilderness trail, or in the streets and alleys of a strange city, or even as a small child in a shopping mall, getting lost brings out a fear that is difficult to describe and even more difficult to overcome when we are in the midst of such a crisis. We have all seen the look of fear and lostness on the tear-streaked face of a child frantically screaming because he has somehow become separated from his parent. As horrible as it is to be lost, it is an experience that unfortunately most of us are quite familiar with.

Equally terrifying and more common is the feeling of being hopelessly entangled or trapped (lost) in a frustrating personal condition or cycle we can’t seem to get out of – a circumstance such as addiction to alcohol or drugs, a diagnosis of terminal cancer, a devastating divorce, or the death of a spouse or child you never imagined would happen to you. Each of these common life experiences leave one feeling hopeless and lost. What has been “normal” in the past is no longer the reality of the present. A new normal that is frightening, uncertain and often times fraught with fear and anxiety is the situation that must now be faced leaving one in that most uncomfortable and vulnerable state of “lostness.”

The Bible uses the word “lost” to describe an even more terrifying condition – a condition of lostness that has eternal consequences – a state of separation from God and from others that has no recourse and no return. Those who are away from the Father’s house, separated from Him, and haven’t found the way back to Him are “lost.” Jesus saw the crowds of people surging about Him and described them as sheep without a shepherd. They were helpless and hopeless, and he was deeply moved with compassion for them. But far worse than being trapped and not knowing the way out is to be lost and not even know you are lost, for then one does not look for salvation, recognize it when it comes, or accept it when it is offered. This is the state of lostness that the Bible speaks of, and the condition Jesus is seeking to help us understand through his parabolic teaching – particularly the parables of the “Lost Things” found in Luke 15.

What About The Lost who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

What does the authority of scripture teach concerning the eternal spiritual state of those who have not yet heard the gospel?

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world THROUGH Him (Jesus). Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him. (John 3:16-18, 36)

Scripture teaches clearly that there are those who perish and those who do not. Notice that the above verse states - it is those who believe IN Christ – not simply those who, through their encounter with nature and the creation or their own innate moral judgment, believe in a righteous Creator – who receive eternal life. God’s intent is to “save the world THROUGH HIM” - through Jesus Christ (John 3:17). The word “through” speaks of agency: in other words, it is by means of Jesus Christ that a person gains eternal life. Jesus Himself said, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). In other words, Jesus Christ is the ONLY agency of salvation. Paul states clearly in his letter to the Romans:

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:13-15)

According to Paul, the ones who call on the name of Jesus are the ones who will be saved. But what of those who have not heard so they cannot call upon that precious name? Paul does NOT assure us that those who have not heard may simply believe on whatever they may have heard and be saved. Rather, he states with solid biblical authority: “Faith comes from hearing the message (the gospel message) and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). Scripture is clear that there are two categories of people, both in life and in death; the saved and the lost. It is also very clear the way – the “agency” that God has ordained for genuine salvation to take place, however questions remain: Is God loving, powerful, fair, and just in his judgments as to one’s eternal destiny? Yes! to all of the above! God is inherently good, and ironically, that is why men and women are lost. In love God created a being in His own image – a being free to choose - not a robot programmed to respond as the Maker designed. In creating such a being to freely love and be loved, God risked the possibility of such a being rejecting His love in favor of independence or even self-love. Humankind did, in

fact, choose this option. Still true to His character, God nevertheless provided a way back even though the cost was beyond description. The way back however could not violate the image of God in man nor force an obedient response. Rather, the God of love chose to wait lovingly for the reciprocal response of love. Those who wish to reject Him may indeed do so. But the question remains: Is it fair and just for God to condemn those who have not had an opportunity to respond to His offer of saving grace? It is important to see that the Bible does not teach that God will judge a person for rejecting Christ if he has not heard of Christ. In fact the Bible teaches clearly that God's judgment is based on a person's response to the truth he has received.

Light – Light - and More Light

Thus, God's judgment is against a person in proportion to his rejection of moral light - regardless of how minimal that light may be. All have sinned; no one is innocent. Therefore, all stand condemned. But not all receive the same measure of condemnation, for not all have sinned against equal amounts of light. God does not condemn a person who has never heard of Christ for rejecting Him, but rather for rejecting the light that person does have. In Romans 1:18 Paul declares: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. **For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse.**"

Not all respond to the light they have by seeking to follow that light. But God's response to those who do seek to obey the truth they have is indeed the provision and the pathway for the imparting of more truth. To him who responds, more light will be given. Like the principle from the Kingdom of Heaven parable of the Sower and the Soil: Lesson #1: *The rich get richer – the poor get poorer.*

"The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables..... Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear." (Matthew 13:10-16)

This repeated promise of additional light to those who obey the light they have is a basic and very important biblical truth concerning God's justice and His judgment. A great example of this principle is found in Acts 10 where Cornelius, the Roman officer, responded to the light he had with his prayer and his good deeds. The biblical account describes him as a man of prayer and good deeds, and God noticed this. Therefore, God

did not leave Cornelius in ignorance and simply accept him on the basis of his response to the initial light he had received. No, God sent his servant, Peter to Cornelius personally with additional truth to provide deeper insight (Acts 10). To him who had - more was given. Since this is clearly revealed as God's way of dealing with men, we can be certain that every person has received adequate light to which he may in turn respond. According to Romans 1:19-20, God's existence and His power have been made evident to all people through the creation and through each person's innate moral judgment or conscience as well. To the one who responds obediently to the little light he has, God will send additional light. His method of course for sending this light is through a human messenger. This, my friends, is the solution to the terrible lost condition of men and women in this world, and this is why Paul calls the feet of those who go to seek the lost - "beautiful feet." Ultimately, then the problem of lostness is not with God's righteousness, but with our lack of obedience in going.

Has Everyone Heard?

Certainly in our day of the 21st century we would conclude that most everyone has heard of Jesus by now! After all its been 2000 years since Jesus walked this earth, died for sinners and provided the way to salvation. Surely missionaries have been sent to every country. Aren't we close to completing the Great Commission?

While the spread of Christianity has been nothing short of supernatural, there are still huge segments of the world's population that have never heard the name of Jesus - let alone a clear presentation of the message of salvation. May God grant that this condition of lostness grab hold of our hearts as we seek to complete the task left to us by our Lord Jesus.

Finishing the Task

Consider the analogy of a security guard charged with the safety of residents on the 10th floor of a nursing home. He knows the floor plan is posted in a prominent place, and it is his responsibility in case of fire to get the residents to the fire escape that has been clearly marked. Should a fire break out and lives be put in jeopardy, it would be his responsibility to get those people to the fire escape. If he discusses with the patients or with a colleague the possibility of some other unmarked fire escape or recalls to them the news report he read of someone who had jumped from the 20th floor of a building and survived, he would surely be charged with criminal negligence. **He must live and labor in obedience to the facts that are certain and he must not delay to act.** He must not lead people astray on the basis of conjecture or logical deduction from limited information.

When all has been said that can be said on this issue, the greatest remaining mystery is not the character of God, nor the destiny of lost people. The greatest mystery is the

paradox of why those who are charged with rescuing the lost have spent 2000 years doing other things, good things perhaps, but have failed to send and be sent until all have heard the liberating word of life in Christ Jesus. **The lost condition of human beings breaks the Father's heart.** What does it do to your heart?

Jesus Christ – The Only Way

In his excellent book entitled *The Great Omission*, author Robertson McQuilkin recounts beautifully the following story that puts the concept of lostness in its proper biblical perspective:

“In a dream I found myself on an island – Sheep Island. Across the island sheep were scattered and lost. Soon I learned that a forest fire was sweeping across from the opposite side. All were doomed to destruction unless there was some way of escape. Although there were many unofficial maps, I had a copy of the official map and there discovered that indeed there was a bridge to the mainland, a narrow bridge, built, it was said, at incredible cost.

My job I was told, would be to get the sheep across that bridge. I discovered many shepherds herding the sheep which were found and seeking to corral those which were within easy access to the bridge. But most of the sheep were far off and the shepherds seeking them were few. The sheep near the fire knew they were in trouble, and they were frightened; those at a distance were peacefully grazing, content in their ignorance and enjoying life.

I noticed two shepherds near the bridge whispering to one another and laughing.

I moved near them to hear the cause of such joy in this most dismal setting.

‘Perhaps the chasm is narrow somewhere, and at least the strong sheep have opportunity to save themselves,’ said one.

‘Maybe the current is gentle and the stream shallow. Then at least the courageous can make it across.’

The other responded,

That may well be. In fact wouldn't it be great if this proves to be no island at all? Perhaps it is just a peninsula and great multitudes of sheep are already safe. Surely the owner would have provided some alternative route.

And so they relaxed and went about other business. In my mind I began to ponder their theories; Why would the owner have gone to such great expense to build a

bridge, especially since it is a narrow bridge, and many of the sheep refuse to cross it even when they find it? In fact, if there is a better way by which many will be saved more easily, building the bridge is a terrible blunder. And if this isn't an island, after all, what is to keep the fire from sweeping across into the mainland and destroying everything?

As I pondered these things I heard a quiet voice behind me saying,

*“There is a better reason than the logic of it, my friend. Logic alone could lead you either way. **Look at your map.**”*

There on the map, by the bridge, I saw a quotation from the first undershepherd whom we know as the Apostle Peter:

‘For neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other way from the island to the mainland whereby a sheep may be saved.’

*And then I discerned, carved on the old rugged bridge itself,
‘I am the Bridge. No sheep escapes to safety but by Me.’”*

(Thoughts taken from *The Great Omission* by Robertson McQuilkin; 1984, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI.)

Closing Prayer

“Oh God! You are the great Shepherd of the sheep. Give us Your heart for those still lost and wandering. Send us out as Your agents to rescue them through the power of Your Word and Your Spirit!” In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Mary Ann Bishop

QUESTIONS for Reflection

Read: Luke 15:1-7

1. What was the complaint of the religious leaders against Jesus? Why do you think this bothered them? We see this same attitude among Christians and the Church today. What are consequences that result from this attitude?

2. What was it about Jesus and His teaching that tax collectors and sinners found attractive and intriguing?

3. Slowly read v.4-7. As you meditate on this passage and ponder its meaning asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any hidden truths that lie deep within the passage. Write down what you learn.

4. Examine your life. How does your life reflect:
 - a. The heart of God (to seek and save the lost)

 - b. The attitude of Jesus (love, compassion and a willingness to lay down His life)

 - c. The activity of a genuine disciple (to leave the familiar and comfortable, and go)

5. In what ways have pride and prejudice affected your attitude toward the lost? In what areas of your life will you ask, and allow Jesus to transform your attitude, and mold your heart to be more like Him.

Read: Luke 15:8-10

6. Slowly read v.8-10. Meditate on this passage and ponder its meaning, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to your heart any hidden truths that lie deep within the passage. Write down what you learn.

7. What three things did the woman do when she realized the coin was lost? How can you apply this to your own life and ministry?

8. Compare this parable to that of the lost sheep. What is similar? What is different?

9. Does your behavior toward the lost and lost things reflect the heart of God or man? What things in your life are influencing your behavior and actions? Will you ask God to help you get rid of **anything** that is hardening your heart and hindering your call and ministry?

10. Heaven rejoices when one sinner comes to faith. When did heaven celebrate your salvation? With whom is God calling you to share your salvation story this week? Pray for that opportunity!

JESUS OUR GOOD SHEPHERD

Does the activity and action of your daily life reflect the same compassionate spirit Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has for the lost? That compassion is evidence of a genuine relationship with God the Father. If not, will you confess your pride and self-sufficiency, and ask God to forgive you and give you His heart for those still wandering in their Lostness?

SALVATION QUESTION

Have you lost your way to God either from neglect or by wandering away from Him and going deep into the world? If you have, will you **repent** of your sin today, confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior and ask God to bring you home to Him?