

Luke 15:1-10 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. 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."

I will be the first to admit that detailed organization has never been my strong suit. But there is one exception to that general rule. My music CDs are all organized thoughtfully into binders. Yes, each CD in its place, alphabetized by artist. And in general, this is a good thing.

But as Jaimee can tell you, it does cause consternation ever once and a while. Every once and while, I decide to take a good look over all my CDs to make sure they are all in their place. And without fail, the evaluation does not go as planned. As I flip through the pages of CDS, blank spots begin to appear. CDS are lost and immediately I am concerned. Those lost CDS must be found. Even if only one is gone, it demands my immediate attention. And so I begin searching in the places where it might be. Perhaps it is in the car. Perhaps it is in the CD player in the house. Perhaps it has found its way into Jaimee's CDs. But if it is not found in one of those places, the search must go on. Perhaps it got moved to the trunk of the car. Perhaps it is underneath the couch or the bed. Oh yes, almost all of the CDs are in their right place, but that one that is lost becomes the focus of all my efforts. After all, I purchased that with my own money. It is mine and I need to have it back in its proper place.

Our Lord Jesus today through two parables reminds us also that He gets very concerned when something is not in its proper place. In fact, He says that He gets very concerned when even one thing is lost. Of course His concern is not over CDs, but over people. As He looks at the people of the world He realizes that many are not in their proper place. They are wandering around in various places in the hands of or at least in the sight of

the devil who wishes to keep them lost forever. And when our Lord beholds these lost people, He knows that it demands immediate attention. He cannot sit back and hope that they return to their rightful place. He knows that unless He begins the search, they will remain lost. And so He goes out and searches until all of the people are back in their rightful place. If only one was missing, no doubt it would still require His immediate and thorough action.

Why is God so concerned with those that are lost? This may seem like a dumb question, but seriously, why does God care for those who stray off by their own sinful steps? Why not just rejoice in those who are in their right place? Why not just accept that some will wander, some will be lost. It is just inevitable.

Why does Jesus worry so much about the lost? Why? Because He has purchased them with His own blood. They are His and He needs to have them back in the proper place. Every unkind word He endured, every whip that found its mark into His back, every place His brow was pierced with thorns was to pay for the sins of those lost ones. Every injustice He suffered, every fist that landed onto His body, every nail that went through His frail body was to pay for the sins of those lost ones. He paid way too great of a cost in order to just let people that He died for remain lost. He must find them. He must carry them back. He must place them back where they belong safely in the fold of His kingdom.

That is why our Lord pictures himself today as the shepherd who notices that one sheep is missing and leaves the ninety-nine behind in an effort to find the lost one. That is why He pictures himself as a woman who when she realizes that one coin is missing rips her house apart looking for the lost one. Those that are lost are His property, His very own people who He purchased at a very high cost, and He will not rest until they are found.

What value do you place on those that are lost? Do they require immediate attention in your life? Each of us know people either personally or by acquaintance that are straying sheep or lost coins. We know people that do not know our Lord. But the question we must ponder today is if their absence from God's fold bothers us as much as it should? Does it bother us as much as it bothers our Lord?

Unfortunately at times, we are all too comfortable just gathering with the ninety-nine on Sunday morning. We are all too comfortable admiring the coins that are still in their place. Do we even notice those

that are missing? Perhaps if we placed signs in the empty pews of the church with the names of people that are missing from God's fold, their absence would begin to be more impressive in our minds.

But the true reason we should be so concerned about the lost is this: they are purchased and lost. Our Jesus died for their sin. He made it possible that they might be found. And it is absolutely sad that ones who Jesus died for in order that they would share with us everlasting fellowship with the Father will instead suffer everlasting darkness and torment with the Satan.

Who is it in your life that is lost? Picture them in your mind. Now picture Christ on the cross dieing for them. Picture Jesus triumphantly on Easter morning rising for them. Picture Jesus even now preparing a place for them. Will their room in the mansions of heaven be vacant for all eternity? It can not be. Jesus paid to high a price for us to simply let the lost go unnoticed.

We must search them out. We must point them to the One who can carry them back to safety. We must point them back to the One who will rejoice greatly in their return. We must point them back to the One who will not have His sacrifice for them be squandered.

For the times when we have not been as concerned as we should be for the lost ones we know, we must go to our Lord and confess our lack of action for these people. We confessed that while we know how good it is to be in the fold of Christ, we have still not been focused enough on those who are missing out on this blessing.

As we repent this morning of our own sin, Jesus and the heavenly angels rejoice also at our return to Him. He welcomes us back fully into the fold with His words of forgiveness. He reminds us that we are His own, who He has purchased and He will not have our inaction in the past keep us out of His fold. He extends to us His forgiveness and His Holy Spirit anew. And as purchased and found people, we leave here today ready to search others out and lead them back home through God's Word.

No one can remain purchased and lost. Jesus paid too high a price. They must be bought back into the fold. They must be found for Jesus' sake. Amen.

