Seeking The Lost

By

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In the 15th. chapter of Luke, Jesus taught three parables all concerning seeking and saving the lost. It is well to note that He was speaking to the Pharisees and the Scribes. He was speaking to them about saving the lost sheep of the house of Isreal. He was not talking about seeking or saving the Gentiles. He was trying to reach the "Publicans and Sinners". The Pharisees and the Scribes objected to Jesus trying to reach the lost, by being friendly with, and eating with the sinners.

The "Publicans" mentioned here were Jews, who were working for the Romans (collecting taxes for Caesar), and were considered traitors to their own people,(The Jews). The "Sinners" mentioned were Jews who for some reason were not keeping God's law.

If we, as Christians, are going to benifit from these parables, then we must realize that Jesus was telling us how to seek and save those who are Church Members, yet are lost. In the three parables, we find three different sets of circumstances which we are to follow in restoring the lost. We find all three of these conditions in the Church today. Jesus gives us the answer.

In the first parable, verses 4-7 there were 100 sheep, and one of them strayed away, and was lost. Only one out of 100 ? Not a great loss, only 1%. Read verse 7:" 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".

Jesus used a sheep in this parable because it is the nature of a sheep to just wander off, and go astray. By nature, a sheep

is inquisitive, and full of curiousity. The Shepherd did not loose the sheep intentionly. The rest of the flock did not desert the one sheep. The sheep did not get angry with the rest of the flock, or with the Shepherd, and desert them. Yet he strayed off, and became lost. Whose fault was it ? Perhaps no ones. Maybe the sheep saw something that looked good to him, and he went after it. Perhaps something that looked good, smelled good, or tasted good enticed him, and he went after it, while the Shepherd and the rest of the flock passed on by, and left him alone and lost.

In any case, the teaching is plain that we should go into the wilderness and seek and save that lost one, and return it to the fold. We may have to carry that lost one on our shoulders for a while (verse 5), but Paul says that "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak". Rom.15:1. Without question we should rejoice, and tell our friends the good news, and share the joy of those in Heaven , that the one who was lost has been found, and returned to the fold.

In the second parable(verses 8-10) we find a different situation. Here the woman had ten silver coins, and she lost one of them. A somewhat greater loss than the parable of the sheep. One out of ten, that is a 10% loss, Quite cause for concern. Another great difference in this case is; that the coin did not just stray off. It did not loose itself. It was not tempted or enticed away. THE WOMAN LOST IT. It was not the coins fault that it was lost. The woman lost it, because of her carelessness or neglect. She lost it because she failed to use proper concern. The coin,(unlike the sheep) was lost even though it was still in the house. Verse 8 indicates that it was lost in part, due to poor house-keeping. She was concerned over the loss, and did

immediately light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek until she found it. This is exactly what we, The Church, should do in a case of this kind. "Light a candle"., "Sweep (clean) the house". "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path". Psa. 119:105. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple". We need to search the scriptures to shed light on the matter, and examine the problem in the light of God's word. Then we need to clean house. We need to "set our house in order". We need to correct the matter. We need to clean up our house, so that it does not happen again. It is not enough, merely to find the lost coin, and still leave our house in darkness, and filled with trash and litter. We must light the lamp, and clean up the house. How unlike the sheep that had just strayed away! Hear the woman in verse 9 :"Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece WHICH I HAD LOST". In both cases there was rejoicing in both heaven and earth when the lost was found.

The next parable (verses 11-32) deals with an entirely different set of circumstances. Here we have two sons in the Father's house, and one of them leaves. One out of two. A fifty per cent loss. Who was to blame? Was it the Father's fault? Certainly not. The Father was more than fair. Was it the older brother's fault. Not at all. The younger brother CHOSE to leave the Father's house, in order to have his OWN way, and to please HIMSELF. He no longer wanted to be in subjection to his Father. He no longer wanted to abide in the Father's house with his brother. He wanted to please himself. He did not want to wait for the Father to give him his reward. He wanted his pleasure and his reward NOW.

We are all familiar with this parable of the prodigal son,

but please read it again. Imagine his life style as he "wasted his substance with riotous living", and "Devoured thy living with harlots". What a tradject condition for one to be in, who had once been safe in the Father's house. Then we see him with his money all gone, and a famine in the land. We see him reduced to the lowest possible level, feeding swine, and even willing to eat the husks that the hogs would not even eat. No man would give him anything. How sad, his condition. Do we feel compassion for him? Certainly we do, but what are we to do about it? Did the Father go after him, and try to get him to return? Did the Father send the other son to that strange country to try to persuade his brother to come home? Certainly NOT. It would have done NO GOOD AT ALL, until the prodigal son repented, and "came to himself".

Remember; this son left his Father's house in rebellion. He was tired of doing things the Father's way. He wanted to do things HIS way.

In this parable, I am certain that the Father is God. The prodigal son represents both the rebellious Jews who refused to accept Christ, and also the rebellious Christian today, who leave the Church,(The Father's House) go off where they can have their own way, and do things their own way. No wonder that the Father did not go after the son. No wonder that He did not send the other son to try to persuade him to come back. Such a person can not be persuaded to do right. If any of us leave God's house in open rebellion, determined to have our own way, God will certainly let us do so. It would be a waste of time to do otherwise. Neither the Father or the brother was obligated to go and try to negotiate a compromise with the other son to try to get him to return.

However; God, in His mercy did provide a way for the erring one to come back. He always does, no matter what the situation. God cares about the lost. There was rejoicing in Heaven over every sinner that REPENTED. What value was placed on the sheep that was lost? What value was placed on the silver coin that was lost? How much more on a human soul?

Verse 17 tells us that the prodigal son "Came to his senses", or "came to himself".K.J.V. Then what did he do? "I will arise" "I will say 'I have sinned". When the young man arose up, confessed his sin, repented of his sin, and asked the Father to take him back as a servant, then the Father had compassion on him, and ran to meet him, and gladly took him back. It is well to note here that the older brother also should have welcomed his brother home, and been glad to accept him. He,too, should have rejoiced.when his brother repented and returned. Still, we learn a great lesson about repentance here. When the prodigal son truly repented, he said:"I have sinned". "I want to come back as a servant". He did not try to work out a compromise. He did not say:"Let us talk over our differences". He did not say:"I will come back IF--" He did not say:"I will come back if you will do things my way". He asked to be restored as a servant. He did not expect to be made a ruler over the house. Instead, he said:"I am no more worthy to be called thy son".

Jesus used all three examples of saving the lost to cover every situation that might arise. In all cases their was rejoicing when they were saved. God was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.However, it made a great deal of difference under which condition that they left the flock. The sheep just wandered away. He was not rebellious.

The coin did not leave on it's own accord. Some one's carlessness caused it to be lost. The prodigal son left on his own determination.

How can we restore and save the lost? That is the question. It would be foolish to deny that all three of these situations exist today. We must deal with each of these situations as Jesus taught. We must also realize that Jesus was correct in regard to the percentage of each catagory. That is realy scary, isn't it? To think that 50% of the divisions in the Church of Christ are caused by rebellious and disobedient members. Often they leave, not only in rebellion, but in anger, envy, jealousy, and hatred. All of these compound the sin of division, and make it much more difficult to be reunited. It is true that we can not go after them, nor persuade them to return so long as they are rebellious, and determined to have things their own way, nor can we go and offer to compromise God's word to gain them. We can not bargain or negotiate away, Jesus' word, or God's plan.

What we can do is to pray that they will come to repentance, and be ready to meet them and have compassion, when they return. I often wonder why it is so hard for some to say:"I have sinned". or:"I am sorry". or :"I want to be a servant". When the prodigal son realized his TRUE condition, he had no problem saying:"I have sinned". We should have no problem forgiving them when they repent. "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found". Lk. 15:32.