

Lost and Found

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[0 : 00] of the lost sheep, the parable that Jesus teaches that ends with the words in verse 7, just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need repentance.

I'm sure you all agree with me that, you know, we like to hear stories with a happy ending. We like to hear of true stories where maybe it's an individual, maybe it's a group of people, perhaps maybe they've become lost in some remote jungle, maybe even drifting out to sea, and maybe sometime later being found.

These feel-good stories, sometimes they're even made into films. You go into the web and you'll see a number of examples. Even rescuers have had to battle through adverse circumstances to get to those who'd been abandoned, who'd been reckoned to be lost.

And these stories, they grip us, they excite us, they make us feel glad that those who were lost, those who seemed to be in an apparent hopeless situation, maybe even their life hanging by a thread, that they were found, that they were rescued, that they were delivered, unable to live and live in joy and peace and happiness.

And if there's that kind of feel-good factor in these life stories, these lost and found stories, how much infinitely more, how much infinitely more satisfying, more heaven rejoicing, are the true lost and found stories of those, even you here this morning, who once were lost and are now found, found, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 56] As John Newton wrote, an amazing grace, I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see. And obviously later in our thoughts, we'll be considering more detail, what does it mean to be lost?

What does it mean to be found? But, you know, even this morning, who even can echo, even the words of John Newton there, you know what you once were, when you were lost, you know what you now are, in having been found.

And Jesus talked of being lost and found in these particular parables, two of which we read, you'll see the trilogy there, the parable of the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin, the parable of the prodigal son, or the son who was lost and was found.

These three stories that go together, we've obviously only got time for the first one this morning, but in this parable of the lost sheep, there's so much for us to grasp hold of, so much to take note of, so much to rejoice in ourselves, in what Jesus is teaching about once being lost and being found.

Four things I think we should take from this little parable, obviously the audience who heard Jesus speak, those who we see in verses 1 and 2, then what Jesus speaks of being the awfulness of being lost, the awful condition of being lost, and then the same verse, verse 4, the awesomeness of God who seeks the lost and finds the lost, and then verses 6 and 7, the aura, the aura of joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, that we see also in the second parable, but what of the audience who hears Jesus speak, as we see there in verses 1 and 2, because this is very important.

[3 : 53] We need to know, obviously, what Jesus is teaching in the parable, a parable, of course, pointing to a greater truth, and when we see who the audience is, or who the audience was, then we can grasp and understand just the message that Jesus is teaching, who are being represented in this parable.

Well, who are there? Who are there? Well, we're told of two sets of groups of people. We're told of tax collectors and sinners. Verse 1, we're told they're drawing near to Jesus to hear Him, so they want to hear Jesus.

They long to hear what Jesus is going to teach them. And then verse 2, we're told of the Pharisees and scribes. They don't really want to hear Jesus. They're grumbling. They're saying, this man receives sinners and eats with them.

So, who are these groups of people? The tax collectors and sinners, if you prefer an older version of the Bible, then you'll see the word publicans.

It doesn't mean that they ran pubs. It meant, of course, they worked for the public interest, the public good. They took in the public revenue from the hated Roman authorities.

[5 : 11] So, these tax collectors weren't very popular people. People in high authority looked down on them. Religious leaders looked down on these publicans. And then, sinners, these, again, people whom, other self-righteous people, looked down on.

People who were considered to be, to not have kept the law rigorously. All the minute detail that these religious leaders had, as it were, added on to God's law.

And people that didn't fulfill the strict understanding of the law, consider sinners. And even those who committed sin, in a public sense as well, they were looked down on as sinners.

But it's that group, that wants to hear Jesus. And it's that group, that Jesus is speaking to, in love. They're lost, and they know it. Now, again, as I say, we'll delve more into the meaning of lost in a minute.

But then, what about the second group, the Pharisees, and the scribes, or, again, as an older version might say, the Pharisees, and the teachers of the law. The religious leaders, whom we mentioned just a moment ago.

[6 : 24] These people, as we said, who didn't look down, and who rather looked down, and those who wouldn't keep a strict observance of the law, the minutia, the minute detail.

And these Pharisees, and teachers of the law, these scribes, who consider themselves righteous before God, because, in their estimation, they kept the law fully.

And, so, two groups, very much different. The first group, are lost, and they know it. The second group are lost, but they don't know that they're lost.

So, Jesus is very aware of those who are around him. And he sees the groups before him. He knows their different attitudes to him. The one group eager to hear what he's going to teach.

The second group going to find something against him, to accuse him. And, you know, Jesus knows that the second group, the Pharisees, the scribes, the teachers of the law, they're grumbling, they're muttering against him.

[7 : 27] This man, this man who calls himself a teacher, this man who teaches in the synagogue, and yet he's quite at home with these publicans and sinners, these tax collectors and sinners.

And these Pharisees and scribes will not put their trust in the Lord Jesus. For us, those who know they're lost, will heed the word of the Saviour, and come to him, and know the joy of being found in Jesus.

So, what about the lost? What about the found? Let's try and delve into this a wee bit more, as we see there in verse 4.

What man, if you're having a hundred sheep, if he is lost one of them, doesn't leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it. You know, in ordinary life, when you're lost, being lost, it's the most horrible experience.

I mean, I've been in that situation, I'm sure many of you as well. But then, the joy of having been lost and found. But then, think of the dangers of being lost.

[8 : 39] It can vary, of course, but things like hunger and disease, or if you're in a very hot climate, dehydration, even loneliness, a real threat of life.

You're not able to access things that keep you alive, you're not able to access fresh water, or food, or hygiene. You can't find your way home. You can't get to where the necessities of life are.

Well, you think of that in relation to the awfulness, of being lost, apart from knowing God as your Lord and Saviour. We talked about the human situation of danger, and being lost.

Well, think of the eternal danger, of being lost, of being far, far, from God's love. From being hungry, and thirsty, in a spiritual sense, and not being satisfied.

Trying to, as it were, find satisfaction, in this and that, but not, in the one who can give you true satisfaction. And you're craving after this and that, but still lost in your sin, lost in yourself.

[9 : 50] Lost, needing a Saviour, the one true Saviour, the only Saviour, who can rescue you from your sins. You're lost without the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you see, Jesus brings home here the danger of being lost, the eternal danger of being lost. And in contrast, the eternal joy of being found.

And you see the, the first example there, in being lost and found, as opposed to the lost coin, the lost and found sheep, the parable there. Now, okay, this is a largely rural society, that Jesus is addressing, but none of us need worry about that.

We can all relate to, to what Jesus is teaching here. A few months ago, I was watching a programme, I think it's been repeated, but anyway, there's a certain crofter in Ness, a well-known individual, well-known young man.

He's got a great business going. He keeps, he's lots of things. He keeps sheep, he keeps cattle, hens he's got. He's, oh, he's a very well-to-do young man. Just driving past his croft the other day. [10:54] But, in that programme, one, one of his sheep was missing. One sheep out of his many was lost. Somehow, the sheep had strayed down a cliff face, and it was stuck.

There was no way of, of that sheep getting back onto, onto the surface again, back safely. And that crofter went, went to look for his sheep. He found it. And with the help of, I think it was at two, maybe three, very brave, young men, brave rescuers, that sheep.

It was found, it was rescued, it was returned safely. And the, the croft, the young man had the sheep actually on his shoulders. You know, although it was one sheep, he wouldn't allow that sheep to be lost and, and, and, and finished.

And you see, in Jesus' parable, you see that sense of, the, the need, the eternal need of, of rescue. Rescuing the lost sheep, the lost sinners. You see how Jesus, addresses his audience, in this respect, which man of you, if you had lost, one of your sheep, even though you had, 99 safe ones, which one of you would actually, well, which one of you, wouldn't go out, to search for that one sheep?

And of course, the audience said, none of us would. Not one person, would let that lost sheep, remain lost. The lost sheep, was an urgent priority, for that shepherd.

[12:20] One, lost sheep, even though 99 were, were safe. But that lost sheep, had to be found, because of the danger, that sheep was in. The danger of wild animals, the danger of, dangerous cliffs, the danger from, lack of, lack of proper feeding.

That sheep, that that shepherd, had cared for, since birth. The sheep, that that shepherd, had nurtured. The animal, wasn't going to be, easily written off.

He's got to find, his precious beast. And the lost sheep, being that, that priority, meant of course, as we see in the parable, that the shepherd, would leave, in safety, the 99 sheep, and go and search, for the lost sheep, until he finds it.

He wouldn't rest, until that lost sheep, was returned to the fold, and it's safe, amongst the other, 99. So, let's connect, with what Jesus, is teaching here, with those, he was teaching, and to ourselves. What about those, who are listening? What about the tax collectors? What about these, so called sinners? As Jesus, is teaching this parable, they're realizing, yes, we're these lost sheep.

[13:30] We're the sheep, whom the shepherd, has gone out to find. We're the sheep, that are lost in our sin. We are, at this moment, separate from, from God, separate from salvation, in our lives, in our lifestyle, in our values, in our soul's condition, before God.

We know we're truly, these lost sheep, without the safety, that the shepherd brings. We are in danger, of our very souls, unable by ourselves, to find our way to God.

Maybe that's, someone here this morning, you know, that you're lost. And maybe, you know, the awfulness, of being lost, might not have, been apparent to you, at one time.

But as you're hearing, the word of God proclaimed, you know, that you're amongst, the lost. And you know that, you're in that, eternal danger, or in danger, of your very soul.

And you know, that the only answer, is, the good shepherd, the God, the awesome God, who seeks the lost, as we see there again, in verse four.

[14:40] Because in the parable, we see that the lost sheep, don't remain lost. The low, that one individual sheep, was searched for, it was found by the shepherd, and surely then, the meaning of the parable, is clear.

We've got good news. The shepherd, does search for the lost sheep, and he does find, the lost sheep. The one, the Lord Jesus, goes out, to search for the lost.

And, even the very ones, whom the world, might just dismiss, as being of no use, no hope, of the dregs of society, no, no.

Again, maybe, there's a lost sheep, here this morning. And you know, that you need to be found. And you know, that only in him, Jesus, is your eternal safety.

We'll be glad, that Jesus does, take the initiative. That he does search, for the lost, and brings, him, then brings you, to yourself. He takes the initiative.

[15 : 42] He searches. You may be even now, searching, even the very, deep, recesses of your heart, and tells you, that your safety, your security, is only in him, only by faith, in him.

And you know, it's that searching, that initiative, initiative, that's God's. That, you know, really, we have to focus on, and when we think, of his care, for lost sinners, even sinners, such as ourselves. Because, you know, this shepherd, as we see in the parable, he spent all his energy, all his time, looking for that one sheep. Others, probably wouldn't have bothered, about that one sheep, but he did.

He did. That sheep was precious, to him. And those, who are hearing Jesus, tell this, this parable, those, as we said, who others would have looked down on, is not worth bothering about.

But Jesus bothered. Jesus bothered about them. As we're told elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus said, he came to save, to seek, and to save, that which is lost.

[16 : 50] Because all who are his, are precious through him. Here in the Old Testament, the book of Zechariah, chapter 9, verse 16, And that day, the Lord their God, will save them, as the flock of his people.

For like the jewels of a crown, they shall shine, in his hand. And that's, how precious, every, one is, whom Jesus searches, and finds.

He's our God, who has compassion, and the lost. Well, if you've been found, if you know, that you've been found, that you once were lost, and never found, then rejoice.

Even in the quiet of your heart, this morning, rejoice. Rejoice that God, didn't leave you, abandoned to yourself, but he searched you, and he found you. Maybe at one time, you thought, you weren't even worth, rescuing.

But in the eyes of God, you are, one of his precious jewels. You're a treasured possession, to bring glory to his name. And just, as we see here in the parable, just, the one who's, well, as we know in your own life, this is, you who are found, rejoice.

[18 : 02] Well, we're told of joy, joy, surrounding, the finding of a lost sinner. You see that, as we read there in verse 5, to verse 7, the aura, of joy in heaven, when the lost, are found.

You see how, how Jesus, how Jesus brings home, the sheer joy, of a sinner, being found. I mean, look at the number of times, even in the first parable, the words rejoicing, or joy, are found.

And even, as we see in the second parable, again, the joy of, of that which was lost, being, being, being, being found. Look at the joy. Look at even the, the parable of the lost sheep.

Verse 5, the shepherd puts the sheep on his shoulders, rejoicing. Verse 6, the shepherd tells his neighbors, rejoice with me. Verse 7, these well-known words, joy in heaven, over one sinner who repents.

So, joy in earth, joy in heaven. I mean, this parable brings out, the, the sheer wonder, of, of joy. The sheer delight, there's more than delight, the sheer, sort of, exaltation of, you know, the shepherd can't keep that, that joy to himself.

[19 : 18] He wants his neighbors to share, in the happiness of, his finding that lost sheep. You see, see joy. The joy of salvation. We, we can't keep that to ourselves.

We're told elsewhere in God's word, to be joyful always, to, to rejoice. To know the joy of salvation. Don't keep it to yourselves. Let others see, that you, have been, once were lost, and now we're found.

And when we talk about joy, we're not talking about, the outward, you know, sort of, exaggerated, forms of happiness. No. Although, there's nothing wrong with, exhibiting the, the sheer exuberance of, of joy, even in the way that we, we address one another, and, and relate to one another.

But there's much more to it than that, isn't there? It's that inner joy, of being a Christian. It's that joy, when you share the good news, that Jesus has come, to seek and to save, that which is lost.

It's the joy, that you have, and must have, when, when a loved one, is found, who once was lost, and now is found, by the good shepherd. Well, let's think of that rejoicing in heaven, for one sinner who repents.

[20 : 33] I mean, this is just awesome, to, to contemplate, you know, it really is, I mean, Jesus emphasizes that again, as we see in verse 10, rejoicing in the presence, of angels, over one sinner,

who repents.

Well, who's in the presence, of angels? God, God's rejoicing. Angels, joining in that rejoicing, the saints in glory rejoicing. There's that, heavenly chorus, of joy, when a lost sinner, is found by the Saviour, when that lost sinner, has his, his, his life, her life, changed forever.

I do believe, it is, the mark of a Christian, to rejoice, when someone, is converted. You know, when someone you know, someone you love, someone you, maybe, known for many years, and you've known their life, and they're converted, they're found by the Saviour, well, if there's rejoicing in heaven, over one sinner, who repents, why is there not rejoicing in earth, over one sinner, who repents, why is there not that, echo of heaven, even on earth, when a sinner, comes to, know the Lord Jesus, as Saviour, surely, it's for you, for me to rejoice, to be glad, to, to express joy, when, a lost sheep, was found.

Jesus is seeking, he is searching, he's seeking, and searching, for the lost sheep, he's seeking, to bring, lost sheep, into his kingdom, and notice, it's a work, that goes on, it's a work, that carries on, we pray, even now, that we know, that that work continues, that there are, lost sheep, even in our own midst, who will be found, by the Saviour, and that we'll know, that he, is the one, who carries you, in his arms, who, shows and expresses, that love of the Saviour, and giving of himself, for you, he's the lost, he's the one, who finds, the lost, he's the one, in whom, you, in whom I, must rejoice, eternally, Amen, let us pray.

O Lord, our God, our gracious, and loving, Heavenly Father, you, who, are, our God, our King, our Redeemer, we give praise, and thanks, that you have, so given us, your encouragement, your assurance, that the lost, are found, and so Lord, even now, and even in the quiet, of the hearts, of your people, may there be, even the prayers, of your people, rising to the throne, of grace itself, that the shepherd, will seek, and save, that which is lost, even a, a loved one, even a friend, even a work colleague, even a neighbor, even a, a family member, Lord, may, we be, consistent, and constant, at the throne, of grace, may we be, pleading, that, those whom we love, will, be found, and brought, into the kingdom, and know the joy, of being found, in the kingdom, even the eternal kingdom, of God,

[23 : 56] Lord, hear us, as we plead with you, hear us, as we continue, to worship you, hear us, as we offer up, unto you, the desires, of our hearts, continue, Lord, with us, now, as we, as we close, the service, in praise, and may we do so, at rejoicing, we pray these things, in Jesus name, Amen.

Well, let's, close in Psalm 23, the, in Psalm's version, on page 28, the tune is Tarwathi, the Lord, is my shepherd, no want shall I know, he makes me lie down, where the green pastures grow, he leads me to rest, where the calm waters, flow my wandering steps, he brings back to his way, in straight paths, excuse me, righteousness, making me stay, and this he has done, his great name, to display, the Lord, is my shepherd, Psalm 23, to God's praise.