

Lost and Found

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[0 : 00] Well now we're a small enough group to be able to cope with a little bit of to and fro if you would like to have that during our passage tonight. So what I'll do is I'll speak for a while, we'll look at a passage and if you have any questions or comments I'll pause for them.

If they're difficult questions I'm going to use this to hide behind. Well now one of my favourite stories this week from the Vancouver Sun was this guy Jamie Martin who last Sunday was skiing on Mount Seymour, did you read this story?

And it was announced that there was a run that was open so he skied down the run and there was no chairlift back so he tried to ski to another run and he found himself outside the boundary so he tried to climb and he found himself at a dead end and it got darker and darker and finally he had to spend the night outside.

He dug himself under a couple of branches bundled up with his ski gear he didn't have any food and he tried to sleep but he could only manage about 15 minutes.

He said all around me I could hear treetops breaking off and small avalanches it was pretty scary. The temperature dropped overnight. When Martin rose just before sunrise he knew frostbite had nipped his toes and fingers he immediately fell over and stood up.

[1 : 30] It took him 20 minutes to get the circulation flowing. He spent Monday climbing up and down hills trying to find a way back up to the top of Seymour.

The snow was up to his waist. Some of us know what that is like. He used a snowboard to help pull him up. As Monday came to an end he started to hallucinate and hear voices in the forest round about and as night fell fear gripped him.

He could see the lights on the mountain above him but when he turned to follow the path it always went to a dead end. So he soldiered on and the police began a search at about 2pm on Tuesday. So he heard a helicopter go over. He ran after it. Nothing happened. And then the weather on Tuesday closed in.

He spent Tuesday night. Sunday night, Monday night, Tuesday night. As he got up the next day his ski pants had become shredded and they fell off.

[2 : 32] He fell into a river. He was drenched. His coat was wet. He walked through the night and early the next morning he stopped. His feet were so frozen in his boots he took them up wrapping his jacket around them.

Too cold to move he dug a trench and curled up under a log because his muscles were seizing up. At an early morning Wednesday three helicopters were dispatched and he could see them flying over and he decided he would stay put.

And the helicopters flew over and flew out of sight and flew out of sight. And he would call after them and then they, let me just get to the good part, after a half an hour they were gone.

He started yelling help hoping someone would hear him and they did. So a rescuer has found him and he says here, after he's been rescued, here is a happy photo of him kissing, his mother kissing him.

He's happy, he's fine. A little bit of frostbite but he's alright. He said, I gave the rescuers one of the biggest hugs I could. I was so happy at that point. He said, I owe my life to these searchers.

[3 : 45] He said, these guys told me that they were called in specially the night before, Tuesday night, to find a body. He said, that really hit me. It was pretty rough to hear. So a happy story, wonderful story.

One of the rescue stories this week. And the reason I raise it at the beginning is because the key text in our passages tonight, come on in, great to have you.

We're not going to notice the fact that you've struggled all through that. No, no, come on in, it's great to have you. The key text is 19, chapter 19, verse 10, where Jesus says, and if you don't have a Bible open, open your Bible up.

We're going to be looking forward at Luke 18 and Luke 19. He says, I have come to seek and to save the lost. In other words, there are all sorts of ways of getting lost.

Jesus has one particular way in mind here, and that is, there's one thing that seems to have the power to disorient us, disorient, that'll do, and to take us off the track and to put our lives at risk.

[4 : 59] It's money. That's what's going on here. Turn back to chapter 18, verse 24. This is in the rich young ruler story.

Jesus looking at him said, How hard is it, how hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

And I know most of you think you're not rich, but you are. You're richer than 90% of people on the planet. You've been raised like I have in a place of great affluence and wealth.

And you and I are bombarded every day by 3,000 advertising messages which tell us that life is about getting rich and spending money. That's what it's about. And Jesus says, Very difficult for the rich to get into the kingdom of heaven.

And so in chapter 18 and 19, we have two stories in parallel. One about a rich young guy, a rich young ruler, and the other about Lazarus, who's also rich. The rich young guy is very attractive and very smooth and very popular and winning.

[6 : 06] And Zacchaeus is very unattractive and deeply despised and both of them utterly lost. But the stories end very differently. And so I want to look at the two of them with you very briefly. So let's look back at chapter 18, verses 18 to 27, shall we?

A ruler, verse 18, asked Jesus, Good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? Now, I want you to see how attractive this guy is.

He has a place of power and he's earned his place of power and he's smooth. He's the kind of guy, he's on the cover of Rich and Fabulous. He's won all sorts of citizenship awards.

He is the epitome of success. He's not just polite. He's not just been to the right schools. He knows the lingo. He comes to Jesus and he knows what it is to give someone a compliment without flattery.

Good teacher, he says. He's interested in religion. He says, I've done a lot of good things in my life. I've got a lot of good things.

[7 : 13] What must I do to get this eternal life thing? And of course, we've been reading Luke and we know that eternal life is not something you can do something towards.

Eternal life is a gift from God because we're lost. And Jesus says, no one is good but God alone. Have you ever wondered why Jesus says that? I think what Jesus is saying is, he's trying to puncture this guy's confidence.

This is one of the problems. If you get really rich, maybe some of you are. People come up to you all the time and treat you as though you're really good and smart and clever and know a lot and are intelligent.

And Jesus talks to this young man who's widely admired, used to people looking up to him, has begun to believe he is a good person. I think he's begun to believe that he shall add eternal life to all his other achievements.

And Jesus says, no one's good. See what he's trying to do? This young man, although he's successful, Jesus thinks he's utterly lost and he's in the grip of a monstrous idol that's going to take his eternal life away from him.

[8 : 28] Watch how Jesus deals with him. He says, here are some commandments. Now if you look down at those verses, in verse 20, at the commandments, Jesus lists five of the last six commandments.

Which one does he leave out? Coveting. Isn't that interesting? Here is a Jewish boy.

He's been raised. He knows the commandments. Jesus stops at coveting. And he waves his hand. And he says, yes, yes, yes. He says, I've done them all. Very worrying moment.

I mean, anyone who thinks they've done, they've obeyed the ten commandments, has not reflected on commandment number one. You shall have no other gods before me. And what Jesus is doing, he says, no one's good but God.

Then he holds up the law as a mirror. But such is the man's confidence, he's not going to look at it. And so Jesus, and it gets a little bit personal here. Jesus reaches out his finger and touches the idol that is gripping this young bloke's heart.

[9 : 34] In verse 22, he says, Now, does Jesus have any idea how ridiculous that sounds?

Does it sound ridiculous to you? I mean, to this guy, he says, I have a garage full of SUVs. I have a collection of Rolex watches.

I have restocked my wardrobe with designer clothing. I have a couple of Mac mansions with granite countertops. I subscribe to Wired magazine online so I can be ahead of everyone else on the drool-worthy gadgets.

I've moved up from the iPhone. It's so 2008. I love my stuff. See, Jesus says, Sell all you have and give to the poor, not because poverty is more spiritual than being wealthy, nor because doing something grand, some grand gesture is somehow going to make him saved.

It's a simple matter of what is most precious to you. That's what he's doing. Is he willing to let go of his idol?

[10 : 56] Or is he going to cling to the thing that has him enslaved? Is this young man going to see in Jesus treasure, true treasure in heaven? Now, one of the funny things about our culture is that there is a weariness in our culture with consumerism.

And there's a tiredness about it. One of the most successful blogs right now is called Stuff White People Like. I don't know if you've seen it. It lists...

The guy writes on each of these things. There are now 119 pieces of stuff white people like. I'll tell you a couple of them. Hummus. Appearing to enjoy classical music.

Facebook. Expensive sandwiches. Number 62. Knowing what's best for poor people. Diversity.

Religions their parents don't belong to. My favourite is being offended.

And they've now... He's now produced a book. A Guide to the Unique Taste of Millions. Finding Social Success with the Caucasian Persuasion.

[12 : 01] They love nothing better than sipping trade-free gourmet coffee, leafing through the Sunday New York Times, Apple products, indie music, food co-ops, vintage t-shirts. They pretend to be unique, but they're all exactly the same.

They're down with diversity, up on all the best micro-brews, breakfast spots, foreign cinema, authentic sushi. They're organic, ironic, and do not own their own TV. It's very clever.

He pokes fun at conspicuous consumption, but that is not what Jesus is doing. Jesus is not sitting on a restaurant on the ski slope poking fun at people getting lost. He's not making jokes about money.

He's come to seek and to save the lost. And here with this young man, he's put his finger on the very thing that has led this guy over the edge and out of bounds. And it's a very searching and gracious moment because, as I said before, in Jesus' view, this guy is in the grip of a spiritual monster that's going to kill him spiritually.

And the simple test for him and the simple test for us with anything is, can we live without it? Is there anything in our lives that we cannot live without?

[13 : 07] If there is, it's between us and God. And that is why he turns away very sad. To the outside world, he's got everything.

He's got money to burn, but to Jesus, he's lost. And he's enslaved to something that's taking him deeper and deeper into lostness. And I want us to see tonight how radically opposite that is of the way the world thinks and works.

The messages you and I get every day, despite the irony and the humour, is that if you're rich, you should be happy. More rich, more happy.

More stuff, more joy, right? But without Christ, there's no joy. The more stuff just makes us miserable. Okay, that's the first guy, rich young ruler.

Let me just pause and see if there are any comments or questions, if anyone has, at this point.

Chris? Is there any way of telling what happens to this bloke after Jesus is gone?

[14 : 10] No, there's not. In verse 23, he becomes very sad in the Greek.

Very sad because he's very rich. In the next verse, Jesus looks at him and some of the older versions have him. Jesus was sad as well. In two of the other Gospels, we read that Jesus loved him but he was not going to compromise because this guy was in the grip of an idol.

So we know nothing about him after this story. And I think that's part of the cleverness of the way Luke's put this together because very soon after this story, we get the Zacchaeus story. It's a nice segue. Other questions or comments? Okay, let's have a look at Zacchaeus then, shall we?

Very briefly. We are so used to Zacchaeus in Sunday school. We're familiar with him. He's domesticated.

[15:14] And I've always thought of Zacchaeus as sort of a Danny DeVito. He's not attractive. We're not meant to think of him as attractive. He is a tax collector. He's a chief tax collector.

He's made an absolute killing out of other people. He's a swindler and a cheat. He is not the person you want to sit next to in church. If you came into church and Zacchaeus was there, he would be the last person you'd want to sit next to.

He is Bernard Madoff, the guy who's swindled \$50 billion and made himself very rich.

He is the CEO of any number of companies who've lost billions of dollars while paying their executives millions every year. And that's exactly the person Jesus has come to seek and to save. And that's exactly the person who ought to be in St. John's next year. So in verse 3, well, you know the story. Jesus is going through Jericho. Zacchaeus thinks he's on the lookout for Jesus.

[16:16] Crowd won't let him see Jesus. He's small. There's intentionality in the crowd. They're blocking him. So he hitches up his robes and he climbs up a tree.

And when Jesus comes under the tree, Jesus stops and he says, Zacchaeus, come down quickly. I must come to your house today. And then we read this lovely little verse 6.

He made haste and came down and received him joyfully. Isn't that great? So we go from the sadness of the rich young ruler to sudden this exuberant joy of Zacchaeus as he climbs out of the tree.

And what happens? What's the next scene? Verse 7. Sorry, no, not verse 7. Verse 8. We're having a feast. If you've been tracking through Luke's Gospel, feasts are important.

And now we have a feast between Jesus and this tax collector. The crowd hates it. You know, the crowd says, no, no, no, no, no. You've left the right guy behind. Don't spend time with this guy.

[17:17] The rich young ruler's the right guy. I mean, he's rector's warden material. He's church committee material. He's bishop material. Whatever. But no sooner does the grumbling cease in verse 8 when we are let in on a secret.

There's been a massive change. This is a beautiful verse. Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, look, Lord. Half of my goods I give to the poor.

If I've swindled anyone, I restore fourfold. Now, we've got to grasp what kind of revolution this is to someone like Zacchaeus.

I mean, this is a guy who lived for money. He not only lived for money, he trod on other people for money. He not only trod on other people, he was willing to bear the hostility of his whole town to make himself rich and now he's willing to give it away?

What is it that transforms someone from being a greedy, a grasping person to being someone who will give? It is they meet Jesus Christ.

[18:30] He's found something in Jesus that's more precious than money, something more valuable than stuff, salvation, eternal life. It's great, isn't it?

I mean, this is repentance. This is radical repentance. He actually does something. It's a transformation in action. He doesn't just sing, I love you, Lord. I'm going to give away my stuff. I'm going to do all these things. He actually does something.

And it's not just that money has lost its shine. It's interesting. He now, he begins to care for people. He cares for the people, the very people who he's swindled.

And that is the proof that Jesus is more precious to him than anything. He's willing to use his money for Jesus. I think the key word in verse 8 is the word, I give. I think they've probably never passed by his lips before.

You know, they feel good. He's not having anything to do with his tithing business. That's for the rich young ruler. That was the way the rich young ruler kept God away from the other 90%.

[19:29] Zacchaeus gives joyfully, hilariously, half of it. And Jesus says, this is salvation. Salvation has come to this house. Verse 2. Verse 9.

Sorry. Salvation has come to this house. Salvation came. He lost half his wealth. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost. I have two things to say by way of reflection.

But let me just pause and see if there are any questions or comments on Zacchaeus. I know it feels a bit odd doing this in church. Does anyone want to say anything about Zacchaeus?

Yeah, Faith. Why is he looking for Jesus?

Why is he looking for Jesus? Why is he looking for Jesus? Like, he's going to grant him. Because he gets like, he's going to be like, oh, I don't even know. He's going to grant him. Like, why that amount of 50%?

[20 : 26] No, no, no, no, no. He's going to grant him. Like, because there's been another question here that he's going to be for the people of God. He's going to grant him. Ah, right, right, right.

That's the lovely thing about Luke. As you read through Luke, you bring in the rest of what you've been reading. Luke's such a clever writer. Luke's such a clever writer under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And I think he expects us to read the gospel more times than one.

Keep going. But we bring in the story of the rich young ruler. We bring in the story of Jesus saying to the disciples three times already what they are to do with their money. We bring in the stories of those who've been generous with their money.

But I think the great miracle that we're meant to see here is that here is a guy and the defining thing about him is verse 2, that he's a chief tax collector and rich, but now gives half of it away.

And he's got enough left so that all those people who he swindled, he can pay back fourfold. That's amazing. Jim? He may not have much left.

[21 : 27] No. And what's very interesting is that Jesus does not say stop being a tax collector.

Those of us who are here in Luke 3, when John the Baptist started preaching repentance, the tax collectors say what must we do and John says to repent don't cheat anyone of anything.

The soldiers, the people who are cooperating with Rome, don't use force against people. It's very interesting. So it may be possible to work in the finance industry.

I'm serious, but be generous. Anyone in the finance industry want to make a comment there? Yeah.

Yeah. The rich young ruler met Jesus in person, but in reality, didn't he? Yeah. Yeah. What's the person saying that he comes behind at the time?

Yeah. Yeah, that's a devastating thing. Did you hear that? The rich young ruler met Jesus but didn't really meet him. The encounter didn't change him. And I think we're meant to see that when Jesus says this is your idol, this is what's gripping your heart, you've got to let it go, he's sad because he's very rich, he can't let it go.

[22 : 50] So he has some sort of encounter, he hears the words of Jesus, he hears the gospel but he holds his idol and I think he remains lost at the end of the story. Now I think there's a number of applications of that.

One is you can go to church all your life. You can hear a lot of sermons and Bible teaching and not respond, not hear the word of Jesus and when you hear the word of Jesus not give over what thing is gripping your heart.

It doesn't have to be money, it can be the silliest thing, you know. It can be a desire to be loved, it can be a desire to be successful at music, you know, it can be anything like that.

Do you know, if Christ is speaking to you now, you know if it's gripping your heart. Yeah, thank you. Anything else? Yeah. Let me come to that in the second point of thinking.

Shall I move on? Okay, let me move on. I just have two things that I want to finish with to commend to you. And the first has to do with Jesus' mission.

[24 : 06] Jesus' mission. Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost. And both the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus at the beginning of their stories were lost and at the end we know that Zacchaeus is found.

Zacchaeus goes up the tree to see Jesus but actually we find out that Jesus has come from heaven and Jesus goes up the tree for Zacchaeus in the end. And that is why Jesus has come.

This is, I think 19.10 is the key verse in Luke. This week, the same week we had the story about Jamie Martin getting lost and spending three nights on Mount Seymour.

On Friday, a group of four young blokes and some of you may be here tonight ignored the signs and the warning from the ski patrol on Grouse Mountain and skied out of bounds.

Did you read the story yesterday? And they headed into an area which has a high avalanche risk and the patrollers were standing there yelling at them stop, stop, stop and they didn't. And the mountain staff regarded it as too dangerous to go down so they called a helicopter in, an RCMP helicopter which had found them a thousand feet down and guided them back to safety.

[25 : 14] And now Grouse Mountain wants these young blokes to pay the cost of their rent and I say amen to that. However, that's just me and I'm old and grumpy. My point is this.

You can get lost accidentally or you can get lost deliberately. It doesn't really matter. When it comes to spiritual things, Christ has come to seek us and to save us and salvation is being found by Jesus. It's being rescued and freed by him. It's being united to him. To be lost is to be away from God. It's not knowing Jesus Christ.

It's not knowing what a treasure we have in Jesus Christ. and the way we get lost is we set our hearts on something other than Jesus. That's death. So I want to encourage you to think the way that Jesus thinks.

that those who don't know Christ, your closest friends and family, they're in danger and are lost and we must pray that the Lord Jesus Christ would seek them and save them.

[26 : 26] And if Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost, it means no one is beyond hope. We don't give up on anyone. It doesn't matter how lost they are. It doesn't matter how bad they are. Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost.

That's the first thing, mission. And the second, this is the final thing. It has to do with true treasure. When Jesus truly finds someone, he never leaves them at the bottom of the ravine.

He holds out his hand and he gives us life and he gives us salvation and he gives us the kingdom and he gives us himself. True treasure is not money.

It's not property. It's not investments. It's not success. It's not stuff. It's not iPods. It's Jesus. He is our true treasure. He's more precious than life itself.

He's more precious than life itself. He's salvation and life. And the guy in the first story, the rich young ruler, outwardly he had everything but he was enslaved to money.

[27 : 36] And because he loved money more than God, his story ends in sadness. And I think that's why Jesus says it's very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Because if you're rich, it's very difficult to have the humility to know that you're lost. And money gives you this aura of security and life but it's a monster if it comes between us and Jesus.

The issue, the issue for us brothers and sisters tonight, what's most important? What's the one thing you cannot do without? What is it you're going to worship? If it's anything other than the Lord Jesus, you're lost.

Come back to him. But if it's Christ, you have eternal life and true treasure. And I just want to finish with this verse. You go back to chapter 18, 26 and 27.

After the camel through the eye of the needle, which is a great picture. You ever tried to push a camel through an eye of a needle? I've worked out there is one way to do it but it involves lasers.

[28 : 49] In verse 27, Jesus said, what is impossible with men is possible with God. See verse 26, they said, who can be saved?

He says, what is impossible with men is possible with God. This is the good news. This is why we've pushed 12 cars to get here tonight. And this is the sign that we've been found with him.

There's a love. There's something in us. There is a love in us we cannot explain. There's a love for Christ above everything in this life.

All the bad things and all the good things. There's a transformation going on in us which goes on every day as we treasure him. which makes us, changes us from being greedy people to generous people, from being enslaved to being free, from being sad to being joyful.

I don't mean happy, happy. I mean true joy. So this is a very important passage for us. Now, who is volunteering to pray tonight?

[30 : 00] Ben. Okay. Let's kneel. Ben's going to lead us in prayer. Amen. Amen. Amen.