

June 14, 2020

Title: To Seek and to Save

Scripture: Luke: 15:1-10 and 19:10

Narrative: When I was growing up in Western Pennsylvania, the neighborhood kids played many games. One of the more active games we enjoyed was “Hide and Seek.” Many of us have played that game in the past. The basic rules were this: one person was “it” and the others were to hide, as “it’s” eyes were closed. When “it” counted to one hundred, the search began to find where the participants were hiding. “Ready or not, here I come,” was the familiar phrase we used. The first person found by “it” would be the next “it.” The fun part of the game was in the searching as well as outrunning the “hiding kids” to the home base. If a “hiding” kid, got to home base before “it”, they were free. Another strategy was to run to home base while “it” was searching in a different direction afar from you. We would spend hours playing this game, especially during the summer.

Hide and Seek. Lost and Found. Our God is in the business of helping us to find a new life through Jesus. This morning, we are going to review three passages. They are the lost sheep, the lost coin, and Zacchaeus, the lost tax collector.

God says in Ezekiel 18:23, “Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?”

God does not delight in the death of unrepentant sinners. He desires for all sinners to repent and be saved. It is important for us to focus on the statement in verse 10. It reads, “*Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*” We tend to think that it is the angels who are rejoicing but Jesus is saying that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God. Who is rejoicing here? It is God who is rejoicing before the angels. God is filled with joy when a sinner repents of his or her sin. **The narrative of the lost sheep and the lost coin are symbols of both joy and repentance.** It is the sheep that is bleating that helps

the shepherd find him. What joy the shepherd has in finding that one lost sheep! Likewise, there is incredible joy when the woman finds her lost precious coin. While the sheep was able to help itself be found by bleating, the coin however, did nothing to be found. It was entirely the action of the woman that found the coin.

To be able to work effectively as Jesus' disciples, we need to remember that people come to know Jesus in varied ways. Some are seekers who need guidance. Others need to be found like the lost coin. Therefore, as the church of Jesus, our goal is to fulfill the Great Commission to seek out and save the lost, and in so doing, we will experience the full joy of God.

A young man applied for a job as an usher at a movie theater in the mall. The manager asked him, "What would you do in case a fire breaks out?" The young guy answered, "Don't worry about me. I'd get out okay." This is not the response God wants from us. How would we respond if someone asked us what we would do if Jesus comes back tomorrow? Would we say, "Oh, don't worry about me. I'd be okay."

We are not to be like the usher: concerned only with ourselves. Instead, our joy and goal are to find people who are like the lost coin and the lost sheep and guide them to the salvation that is found only in Jesus Christ. We should do this work with diligence so that we can rejoice in the salvation of the lost. Our highest calling and the most important work God has for us is to continue what Jesus came to do.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Only Jesus can save the lost! Have we surrendered our life to Him? Maybe, some of us are being led by the Holy Spirit this morning to surrender afresh to Jesus Christ, who is our Lord, Savior, and King.

A pastor telephoned the home of some recent visitors to the church. A voice on the other end of the phone answered in a whisper, "Hello." The pastor asked, "Who is this?" The quiet voice said, "Jimmy." The pastor asked, "How old are you, Jimmy?" The voice said, "Four." The pastor then asked, "Jimmy, can I please

speak to your mom?" Jimmy answered, "She's busy." "Then can I please speak to your dad?" "He's busy." "Are there any other adults in your home?" "The police." "Then let me speak to one of the police officers." "They're busy." "Jimmy, who else is there?" "Firemen." "Well, can you put one of the firemen on the phone?" "They're busy." "Jimmy, what are they all busy doing?" "They're all busy looking for me!"

Just like Jimmy, a lot of people are hiding. They are hiding from parents and police; they are hiding from bosses and spouses; they are hiding from teachers and coaches. And oftentimes, they are hiding from God. We need to ask the question, "Why do we hide from God?" We hide from Him because we know that we have done something wrong. We saw that happen to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Because of their sin, they hide from God.

Then, there was Zacchaeus who hid from God for a long time. He was a sinner who cheated many people out of their money. But when Jesus came to town, he was compelled to discover Jesus for himself. Jesus knew Zacchaeus was a seeker and wanted to change his life.

Why did Jesus come?

1. Jesus came to FIND US (vs. 1-5)

Zacchaeus was curious and wanted to see who Jesus was, but he did not want Jesus to see him! Zacchaeus had run from God, but Jesus had sought him out. Jesus was not so concerned with Zacchaeus' occupation or reputation but was deeply concerned for his salvation because He loved him.

2. Jesus came to Be A FRIEND To SINNERS (vs. 6-7)

Zacchaeus hurried down the tree and gladly received Jesus' invitation to dine with him. All the people present that day grumbled because Jesus had gone home with such a notorious sinner. Zacchaeus knew he was sinful, but he also knew that he had finally met the One Person who could forgive his sinfulness and

help him deal with all the brokenness that his sin had caused in his life and in the lives of others. Jesus did what others could not do and that was to love Zacchaeus.

3. Jesus came to SAVE US (vs. 8-10)

Zacchaeus had led a sinful life but now he knew he was a saved soul. That is what salvation is: its freedom from the power of sin. Zacchaeus' major sin was materialism. He was hiding from God and others in his pursuit of wealth and desire for meaning and security in his life. This pursuit of wealth had so controlled his life, that it caused him to hurt others and himself. But when Jesus found him, he knew that he had been forgiven and that he had been set free from the power of sin in his life.

What do we need to do to be set free from sin today?

Jesus came to earth to seek and to save the lost. Only Jesus can do that! Let us ask these questions: Have we surrendered our life to Jesus? Do you know someone who needs to do that? Do we feel compelled by the Holy Spirit this morning to surrender afresh to Jesus Christ as our Lord, Savior, and King?

He is waiting for us to respond to seek and save others. He will lovingly and freely give new life to all who come to Him. Amen.