

The Sought and Found Now Seek and Find

- It's awful feeling lose smthng imp to you. Know feeling? I do. 1st time, little boy; bus trip; toy; seatback pckt; gone; pain/loss. Trivial; much bigger, more imp thngs prsn can lose: keys, wallet/purse, wed ring, postn at wrk, house in fire/fld, frndshp, ability wlk/tlk/thnk, spouse, child. Ever lost anthng like that? If have (many have), then know that awful feeling! You either resign self to sad reality that what's lost: gone forvr (like I did). Or, if think still hope find it, you srch like crazy; relntlss; pour all effrt/enrgy into the srch until find wht looking for. Think for instc: srch prty looking for missing child. Law enfrcmnt & volntrs do evthng in pwr to find her – nvr give up. And when do find her, it's like whole wrld rejoices.
- Today J tchs us: that's what Lord's like! Lord srchs like crazy; relntlss; pours all effrt/enrgy into srchnng for missing his chldrn, bec hates awful pain losing them. He also loves incrdbl joy finding them – joy of their recovery/return – it's like all/hvn rejoices. So he nvr gives up. Today J wants us to see that there's nothing more imp to our Lord then srchnng for & finding the lost.
- So J tells 2 prbls, back/back: re a missing shp/coin. **Vs. 4, 8.** That's Lord; he's relntlss. Not content w/1% loss. So leaves 99 in safe-kpng of other shphrds; goes out & scours fields, woods, thickts, valleys, caves, evwhr! Gets dwn on hands/knees. W/one hand, holds little oil lamp; w/other, runs fingrs thru dirt floor of dimly lit little house, trying find tiny little coin. That's what God is like: relntlss.
- So who's shp/coin/lost? Don't forget wht prmptd the prbls. **Vs. 1-2.** 2 grps ppl: tax colctrs/sinners, who by sinful lifestyle had ignrd God's law & not lived way God wants; and Phars, who by sinful attitds had ignrd God's Gos & not loved way God wants. It's exctly like prbl 2 lost sons, which comes immdty afr today's rdng fr Lk 15 (Lost Ch bec lost shp/coin/sons). In that prbl: yngtr/prodgl son ignrd God's law & sinned in behvr, while older son ignrd Gos & sinned in hrt. Both were lost; both needed be found; so Lord sght them both! And what J is tchnng us here w/these lost prbls in this Lost Ch: by nature, we all are lost! In our sinful human nature, apart fr faith/Xp, we are like shp caught in brambles, like coin buried in dirt floor. Can't free/save selves or find our way back to shpfld or coin purse. W/o J we (& evone else in wrld) are unbels, seprtd fr God & condmnd to etnl dth. And until we realize that, until see selves as lost shp/coin, then we'll nvr truly appreciate relntlss efforts of our gracious God to S&F us.
- How he do that? Sent us J! Remem time J met anthr tax colctr named Zach (short guy, climbd tree see J)? When J met Zach, said: **"The Son/Man came seek/save the lost" (Lk 19:10).** True for Zach & true for us. J came into wrld seek/save us, bec we: lost. Came fulfill God's law by living it perfly, then giving us his prfctn. Came fulfill God's Gos by paying/sins/cross & rising dead open hvn for us. J did evthng to seek/save us – or, as says today: pulld us out brambles & put shldr; pickd us up out of dirt floor & placed in coin purse. He sght, fnd, & rejoices over us. **Vs. 5-6, 9.** Think of exctmnt, relief, news covrg when srch party finds the missing child they've been looking for. J says: when his lost are found, all/hvn rejoices; chrbm/srphm celebrate! I can't wait get to hvn & see what that looks like. But this is big deal to God! He srchs relntlssly & celbrts joyfly when his chldrn are returned to him, safe & sound.
- If this is such big deal to God, shldn't it be big deal us, as well? I mean, once we realize: we were S&F when we were lost, shldn't we now in turn S&F others who are lost? Isn't that natrl respns/Gos; what God wants us do? It certainly is! We're really not follwng in ftsps/Xp: if we're willing sit back/watch a shp wander away fr GS or stay stuck in thicket; if don't care that coin is buried in dirt & don't even try look for it. If it's true that **vs. 10**, then God is teaching us to rejoice over that too, and to do smthng to make it happen. The S&F now S&F.
- How do that? Probly depends on each indvdl shp, each partclr coin. Ev person is diffnt. Let's think re our context here, as members/SJ:
 - Ev yr, unchrchd fams enroll chldrn in our school, where kids hear Gos of J ev day. How can we connect those unchrchd fams to our ch? How can we tch them Gos, tch Xian disciplshp? We certly make point invite them to our BIC. What else can be done to bring closer to their GS?
 - And what re all fams in our surrndng commnty that are looking for non-public, maybe even Xian, elemntry school for kids, but don't even know we exist? What outreach efforts are we undrtkng to put name out there, to extend the invittn, to let ppl know re precious gem that our school is?

- What re all ppl in our commnty who have no connctn to J or a ch? Maybe used have connctn but smhow got burned and now very hesitant re all things ch. What we doing to invite them to sit at ft/J, to listen to what he says? If there are special occassns when they may be more open to visiting a ch, like Xmas Eve or ES, what we doing to welcome them here?
- And how re this grp/ppl, very close to my hrt – all mems/SJ who hardly ever come to worship? The single most imp activity of a Xian is the wkly gthrng of fellow bels for worship. I did little math again for this sermon, like did few wks ago. We: ch of 743 souls. Of those, by my count, a full 262 ppl (not incld hmbnd or colg stdnts) almost nvr come to worship. That's 35%, full third of our SJ siss/bros who: absent almost all/time. They're like shp trotting happily into thicket; like coin quietly rolling away. We can't just sit back & watch it hap w/o doing smthng, w/o saying anything! That's why your Prs, SC, & Elder Brd work so hard at reaching out to the straying.
- And finly, of course, there's the segmnt ppl caught in sin & not repentant. That's extrdnrly dangrs to their soul, bec impentnc leads unbelf, and unbelf lead hell.
- So, this: task before us to which our Lord calls us. We've been S&F; now we S&F. J uses us to S&F his lost ones. And whthr they're in commnty or own ch, wthr just starting stray or totally stuck, we can't just sit by & do nothing. Nor can we ever become so pridfly self-confdnt that we forget: dvl's wrkng hard on us too, trying to get us to wander away fr flock or fall into dirt floor. St. Paul once: **"If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! (1 Cor 10:12).** And St. Pt reminds us: **"Your enemy the devil prowls arnd like roaring lion looking for smone devour" (1 Pt 5:8)** – smone like a lost shp! Dvl attacks all/us, just like Lord seeks all/us and uses all/us to seek others.
- Next wk in ch we get to celebrt spcl indvdl whom J S&F. Sept 21 is traditional date for celebrating St. Mt, the Ap & Evnglst. Mt was tax colctr who was lost, but J S&F him – we'll think more re that next wk. But for today, I encrg you to realize that you were lost, to thank God that you were S&F, and to let that move you to S&F others who are lost, bec as J says, **vs 10**. The SF now SF.

Luke 15:1-10

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

⁸ "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

