

## “Lost and found.” (8)

I would like to begin today by sharing with you some sentences from the book entitled “**The world’s biggest lies**” in relation to relationships.

1. My wife doesn't understand me.
2. Trust me; I'll take care of everything.
3. Of course I love you.
4. But we can still be good friends.
5. I'll call you later.
6. I've never done anything like this before.
7. Now, I'm going to tell you the truth.

We’re continuing our study of the parables of Jesus where Jesus is constantly saying to people, “**Now I’m going to tell you the truth.**” We’re going to look at **Luke 15:8-10** where we find the parable of “**The lost coin.**” Now this parable is closely related to “**The parable of the lost sheep**” which we looked at last time in **Luke 15:3-7**. But it’s also closely related to “**The parable of the lost son**” which is found in **Luke 15:11-32** and we will look at the next time we were together.

All three parables go together and that’s because they all come from the same source. **Luke 15:1+2** “**Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."** In other words the parables are told to the Pharisees and the teachers of law who were condemning Jesus for associating with sinners. And so what Jesus is doing in all three parables is explaining why He associates with such people.

**Luke 15:8-10** “**Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.**”

I remember when I was young and my parents got a new settee, we used to tear the bottom of the old one to look for any coins that been lost down the back of it. And sometimes we would find a penny coin or if we were really lucky we would find a ten pence piece and we would go to the shop and buy a sweet with it because it wasn’t enough to feed the family with.

Now the coin in question here is a silver drachma, which by our standards is worth very little. But during Jesus’ time, this was worth a lot; it was equivalent to just over a day’s wage. So now we can understand why this woman was so desperate to find the lost coin, it meant the difference between eating and starving. And in those days like some people in the world today, most people lived very much on the edge of things.

And we saw that in **Matthew 20:1-16** when Jesus talked about “**The parable of the vineyard workers.**” When all the men stood at the market place all day long, waiting for the opportunity to work, very little stood between them living and starving. That’s why Jesus says at the end of **Luke 15:8** that the woman, “**swept the house and searched carefully until she found it.**” In other words, she turned the house upside down because whether or not she found it, would determine whether or not her family would eat.

Now remember that Jesus is talking about His relationship with sinners and tax collectors. I want to share with you a **couple of points** about this parable today, to help you understand it possibly in a way that you’ve never thought about before.

So let me ask you for my **1<sup>st</sup> point**, **how was the coin lost?** You see there’s no arguing that the woman herself lost the coin. Maybe it was through stupidity, through carelessness or even neglect. In either case the woman was responsible; it was her own fault that the coin was lost. So we can’t blame the coin, because the coin was lost through no direct fault of its own. And unlike the sheep which we looked at last time, which strayed and became lost through its own stupidity, the coin was completely passive. In other words the coin being lost was someone else’s’ responsibilities.

**Have you ever been trying to watch a TV programme but there’s a distraction?**

I remember trying to watch the **US Masters** golf one night and on the window was this fly just buzzing around and around, trying to get outside. But it couldn't because it was powerless to do anything for itself, it couldn't open the window and fly to freedom, it couldn't save itself. I had to open the window and let it go free. I bet you thought I was going to say that I squashed it with a newspaper, but I had to help it, because it couldn't save itself.

And the point of the story is that the coin couldn't save itself, it could do nothing to save itself. And again unlike the sheep, the coin couldn't wander back. It couldn't shout out to the woman that it was lost, and when you think about it, it is a coin, it wouldn't even realise it was lost. But the point I'm trying to make is that all the searching had to be done by someone else.

Jesus says in **Luke 19:10** "**For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.**" I've said it before and I'll say it again, God in the human form of Jesus The Christ came on a search and rescue mission. He came to search for that which was lost and bring them to salvation. And loved ones that includes us, that includes every single human being on this planet that is willing to let Him save them. **Titus 2:11** says, "**For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.**"

And that brings me to my **next point** that I want to ask you, **how are people lost?** Now it would be very easy to go off the mark with this parable and make applications that can't be made. But every person who is lost is lost because of their own sin, but remember that the coin is passive, people are not. No person is lost just because of the sin of someone else.

God put an end to that in **Ezekiel 18:1-4** when He said, "**The word of the Lord came to me: 'What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: 'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?'' As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.'**" In other words, you're responsible for your own sins; you can't go blaming others for your sin.

The story goes that during the days of **John Wesley** and concerning his work among the coal miners of **Cornwall**, whole villages were transformed from a gambling, swearing, and Sabbath breaking people to men and women of sobriety and godliness. In every home there was a picture of **John Wesley**, the man they all knew and loved. And the story goes that one day a stranger visited one of these humble homes and saw the picture hanging on the wall. And the visitor asked the man, "**Whose picture is that?**" And the old miner reverently lifted his hat and said, "**There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.**"

This great preacher was a powerful influence in his time with the people he met. But the question is **what kind of influence do you have on others?** You see the influence we have on other people can determine where they spend eternity. **Do you realise the power you have to influence people?**

**Titus** tells us how we can influence other saints in the church and those who oppose our teachings. **Titus 2:7+8** "**In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.**"

And again Paul reminds us that it is the church that is to do the influencing not the world. **Ephesians 4:17-19** "**So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.**"

In other words, our Christian lifestyles, teachings and beliefs should be the very things that influence the people around us, but we shouldn't let it happen the other way around. **What did Jesus say about you and salt? Matthew 5:13** "**You are the salt of the earth.**" You're not the salt of your church building; you're not the salt of your house.

You know when you look in a salt dish, **what do you see?** Ah, salt you may say, well what I see when I look around at some Christians, is salt enjoying the company of the same salt. But Jesus says, you're not the salt in a salt dish, you're the salt of the earth, now go and season and influence the people in your world with that salt.

Mix with the ungodly salt and influence it to until it becomes godly salt.

Jesus said to His disciples in **Matthew 16:6** says, “Be careful, be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” The word “yeast” used in Bible terms often relates to evil influence. That’s what Jesus meant in **Matthew 23:15** when He tells them, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.”

But the point I’m trying to get across is that people can influence people. And as Christians we should influence people for the good but we need to be on our guard against the world influencing us with evil. And that can come in many different forms; it can come in the form of false teaching. It can come in the form of lack of church attendance, where it’s not important for you to come to worship regularly. It can come in the form of a tired attitude towards sin.

Because if your influence helps someone to decide to become a Christian, they are just going to follow your example. They won’t think that the Bible is important, if you don’t think it’s important. They won’t think it is important to come to worship to meet with other Christians, if you don’t think it’s important to come to worship and be with other Christians. They won’t think it’s all that important to give up some sin in their lives, if you don’t think it’s important to give up the sin which is in your life.

But the question is **who is influencing whom?** You see when you let the world influence your religion, your religion becomes worthless. Just like the coin in the parable, when a coin is lost, it becomes worthless. You know when a coin goes out of circulation it still has it’s basic worth. In other words **5 pence** lost is still worth **5 pence**, **10 pence** lost is still worth **10 pence**. But any coin that is out of circulation being unused is worthless. Money is only good when it is used, when it is circulated.

And what Jesus is teaching us here is that He could see that people could wear the name God and could live the will of God, but yet they were lost to God. Their soul is still worth more than the whole world, but their souls are not given to God, they’re lost.

**Romans 1:18-21** “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.”

People are lost and they’re not even bothered about it, **and why aren’t they bothered?** Because they don’t even recognise they are lost. A woman loses one coin, so what, **what’s a coin?** The world says, “Forget it, it’s just a coin.” The Scribes and Pharisees thought that way about sinners. **Why be bothered, the lowly, the outcast and the poor, why bother?**

You see loved ones, a coin may be just a coin and some people may care less but coins have more than their monetary value. Such as this coin was to its owner, she got a lamp and lit it and searched the whole house to find, that which was lost.

**How keen are we at searching for the lost in the same manner?** Most of us are quite willing to search the worship place. In other words we’re quite happy to wait until some lost soul comes to us here in the building on a Sunday morning. **But what about outside, what about the other 6 days of the week?** You don’t have to come to worship to find out about God, this is just the place where we gather every week to worship our God. I’m sure most of us have got friends who aren’t Christians.

**Are we going to share the Gospel with people the other 6 days a week, or are we going to have the attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees?** Are we going to say, “**Why bother, they won’t listen anyway.**” You don’t know that, unless you’ve tried.

I got a hold of a survey conducted by Christians. It was all about church growth and they asked over 10,000 Christians one question. “**What was responsible for your coming to Christ and this church?**” Here’s what they replied, **0.5 %** said I attended a Gospel meeting. **1 %** said I visited there. **2 %** said I had a special need. **3 %** said I just walked in. **3 %** said I liked the program. **6 %** said I like the minister. **5 %** said I like the Bible classes.

Take a guess about how **79 %** of people came to Christ and became Christians. **79%** of people said they came to Christ and His church because a friend or relative invited them.

You see, Jesus didn't say, the preacher is the light of the world, He said, in **Matthew 5:14** **"You are, we all are the light of the world."** And loved ones we don't need to share the Gospel with the world in one go. We don't need to wait until there are 3 or 4 or even 100 people around us.

We need to share the Gospel with people one at a time. **1 Peter 4:10** **"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."**

I love that story a man who was walking along a beach, and he saw someone in the distance leaning down, picking something up and throwing it into the ocean. As he got closer, he saw thousands of starfish the tide had thrown onto the beach, unable to return to the ocean during low tide, the starfish were dying. He observed a young man picking up the starfish one by one and throwing them back into the water. And after watching this seemingly futile effort, the man said, **"There must be thousands of starfish on this beach. It would be impossible for you to get all of them. There are simply too many. You can't possibly save enough to make a difference."** The young man smiled as he continued to pick up another starfish and tossed it back into the ocean and said, **"It made a difference to that one."**

**You want the church here to grow?** You need to plant the seed one at a time in the hearts of people outside this building. And as God gives us opportunity we will water it, then God will cause the seed to grow and then He will add to our number here. And when God does add to our number, it's a time to rejoice.

I remember when I lived in Scotland, I lost my wallet and so I cancelled all the credit cards and reported it to the police. A few weeks later Roxanne was playing with her toys and she was playing shops. And out from behind one of the units, Roxanne brings out my wallet; Roxanne had it all the time. Now there was rejoicing in our house that night, as I had **£20:00** in that wallet and that meant we could by a Chinese takeaway.

Now my point is this, although we rejoiced, we didn't go out in the street and rejoice with our neighbours, but the woman in the parable did. **Luke 15:9** **"And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.'" She was overwhelmed with joy, finding that lost coin was more important to her than the other 9 coins she didn't lose.**

**Why?** Because they were already safe, she knew exactly where they were, they were in her possession. And that's why Jesus goes on to say in **Luke 15:10**, **"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."** God loves us and cares for us and gives us grace and peace and eternal life. But nothing makes Him and His heavenly hosts happier than someone who turns their back on their sinful lifestyle and turns toward God for a godly one.

Just like when the shepherd brings home the lost sheep, heaven rejoices. You know I get e-mails all the time from churches all over the world where they want us to rejoice with them because someone has been baptised into Christ. And in our hearts we do rejoice but let me say this, heaven rejoices more. Over the past few years God has added a few people into this part of His kingdom here in Great Barr.

And when people were baptised we rejoiced with them, but let me tell you this, heaven rejoiced more. **Hebrews 12:22** says, **"But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly."** That's what happens when you decide to follow Jesus, thousands upon thousands of angels gather in joyful assembly.

**Why?** Because when sinners repent of their ways and want to follow God's ways, that's worth celebrating. When sinners say, **'not my will be done, but His will be done'**, that's worth celebrating. Let me encourage you this morning if you're not a Christian, to talk to someone today about what it means to be a Christian.

And let me encourage you today to seriously think about becoming a follower of Christ so that you because of your decision to follow the Christ, can give the saints not just here but all over the world and in heaven a reason to rejoice with you.