

Prestonwood Connection

#6 Tell Me The Stories Of Jesus

A Story About Something That Is Lost

Luke 15:1-20

March 15, 2006 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, A Story About Something That Is Lost]

Wouldn't you like to say thank you to Rick and to Mark Good and our praise team for such a great job tonight? [applause] Mark Good who a..., sang on that duet with Rick has his teenage son at Children's Hospital tonight. He's been there since Saturday evening and they've been doing some testing and thus far things are...are moving along, but I say that to say that when I spoke with Mark this afternoon I was just calling to tell him that we'd pray for him tonight and he said well I'm gonna be there. And I said Mark you don't need to come, we don't expect you and he said no I really want to be there and a..., so he came tonight and has been a part of this and his son Robert is at Children's Medical Center tonight and I just hope that you'll pray for the Good family, for Mark and for Jamie, his wife, and for Robert, his son, as we pray for so many other needs that are represented here tonight and we'll have a time of prayer a..., a little bit later in the service tonight, but a..., you did a great job singing tonight. I'm so proud of you, you just came in and, you know, put away the distractions and connected your minds and hearts and voices and a..., it was great to see you singing and celebrating and worshiping the Lord tonight together and I think that's what really makes a difference in this gathering, midweek, is it's that pause point a..., to sort of readjust our focus and to help us to be able, together, to a..., take our cares to the Lord, cast every care upon Him because He cares for you. To lift up praise to His name and to exalt His name together and that's what we've done tonight and I'm so thankful for it. I'm also very thankful to each and every one of you for just being such great hosts and so warm to Anthony and Tony Evans last week. I hope so many of you were able to be a part of that and enjoyed that a..., [applause] it was wonderful, if you missed the message by Dr. Tony Evans last week, Pastor of The Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship here in our city, you missed an incredible message and a..., I hope that you will pick up a copy of that message and that you will get a chance to listen to it in days to come.

Don't you hate it when good money is spent on a study that only proves something that you already know? I mean, so many times we read studies and we wanna go, well dud! I mean, who didn't know that. And just today I was handed a study that proves something that I already knew and I couldn't believe that they spent money on it. Do you know what the study was? Listen to this, male drivers waste 6 million hours a years. Heh! Male

drivers...British male drivers waste nearly 6 million hours a year because they're lost on the road and reluctant to ask for directions. [congregation laughter] Men, who are lost, wait on an average of 20 minutes before giving up and asking for directions, while women only wait 10 minutes before seeking help, according to a survey that was done and a study that was commissioned by the Royal Automobile Club Direct Insurance. Men even endure a nagging period, for around 10 minutes, from their partner before throwing in the towel and stopping to ask for directions. Based on the responses of these adults and then of course calculated a..., based on national averages, the survey revealed that some 64% of couples admitted to having arguments over getting lost on the road. Now I've got some couples here tonight. How many of you have ever had at least one argument? Now let's just be honest tonight, we do this publicly in the Baptist church, we confess. How many of you, okay, now don't look at em, just look at me hold your hand up? [more laughter] Okay we've had some fights in here, so we're in this 64% that they talked about. Only 27% percent of couples planned their journeys before setting out. So three quarters of the people on the road don't have a clue to where they're going. That's why you have trouble in traffic, if you've never figured that out. And then just 36% of couples rely on landmarks and road signs to find their destination. Craig Martin from the RAC Direct Insurance said that:

"Awareness of the problem could increase and could improve driving standards..."

We gotta be...we need to be aware of it. He said:

"...the anxiety increased stresses level and road rage ~~that can be a...~~ that can often be subsided if they will simply take time to get direction and concentrate on where they're going."

Well, what an interesting study, because I think most of us know that men have a tendency to persist in a state of being perpetually lost. Heh! At least that is certainly something that a..., is characteristic of so many. We laugh about it, but the fact of the matter is, is that while that may be true of men and the male species as we drive, the Bible tells us that it is true of all of us when it comes to our relationship with God. The Bible tells us that one of the most foundational and fundamental of all principles that we can ever understand or ever perceive is the fact that each and every one of us are in a condition that the Bible calls being lost. The Bible describes our world as a lost world. In just a little while this evening a new episode will air of the Emmy Award Winning series entitled, *Lost* and I don't know how many of you watch *Lost* because many of you are here on Wednesday nights and sometimes that may conflict with our schedule, but the series *Lost* is about a group of people who are on Oceanic Flight 815 that tore apart ~~over the mid-Atlantic or excuse me,~~ midway over the Pacific and they ended up on a deserted island in the Pacific. It's sort of like a modern day ~~Gideon's Island...Gideon's Island...~~ Gilligan's Island. [slight congregation laughter] Gideon's a biblical character, Gilligan wasn't, if you didn't know that. [more

laughter] Just wanna be sure I'm correct up here. It's kind of a modern day Gilligan's Island, but it's a lot more intense and there are a lot more character's involved in the series. But the series has found great interest because people are fascinated with the idea of a group of people who have lives and life stories that have to do with all being lost together. And so this idea of being lost is something that is dominant and predominant in the theme of Scripture, that we live in this lost world and that we need to understand something about what it means to be lost. And while we're not stranded on this world, on a desert island, most of us at one level or one degree of another understand something of the experiences and the emotions that surround being lost either personally or spiritually.

Well, tonight I want us to look at a chapter that talks about being lost. It's Luke chapter 15, it probably is the best known of all of the parables and the most often referenced of all of the parables, apart from, the parable of The Good Samaritan. The parable of The Good Samaritan is one that we've already talked about and studied together here in the series that I'm involved in called, *Tell Me The Stories Of Jesus*. But tonight what we see is a parable about something that is lost and of course the most well known and the one that touches most hearts, the one that has found it's way into our contemporary culture and that is a part of our vernacular, our common every day speech, is the one about the prodigal, The Prodigal Son. But I want us to frame this parable tonight and I want us to take time to investigate it together, because I really do believe there are some things that we need to learn tonight and that we need to see about our world, about our Savior and about His work in our lives. Luke 15, verse 1 says:

¹*Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.*
²*And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying "This Man receives sinners and eats with them."*

Now it's so important that you get the context of this parable, it all has to do with the audience and the audience are an unsightly group of people, tax collectors and sinners, that are all coming and gathering around Jesus. And the other group of people are the Pharisees who were there and they were incensed, they were offended by the fact that if Jesus were as He claimed to be, the Messiah of the household of Israel, why in the world would He attract such lowlife scum to be a part of His audience and a part of His following? He was appealing to the wrong crowd. He was connecting with the wrong people and therefore this entire setting in Luke 15 has to do with a suspicious group of people, these unlikely and unsociably a..., acceptable people that were gathering around Jesus and the Pharisees who were upset and who were condemning it. And so in response to this setting and to this circumstance the Bible tells us in verse 3:

So He...

That is Jesus!

...spoke this parable to them saying:

Here's how Jesus responded to His critics, He spoke to them in a parable and what He does, is He gives them one parable. I wanna be sure you understand this, one parable with 3 pictures. One parable with 3 increasingly, intense scenarios that all reflect the same thing, the same concept, but ultimately delivers to the heart the powerful message that Jesus wanted them to get that day and I believe is a message that He wants us to get as we live and minister in this lost world in which we live today. In many ways you could call Luke 15 the lost and found chapter of the Bible.

Do you know that we have a "Lost and Found" here at Prestonwood? Have you ever lost anything here? They'll send you to "Lost and Found" if you go right out those doors, turn to the right, there's a room right around the corner, right out there off of the atrium and inside that room there's a closet and in there is something called "Lost and Found." In that "Lost and Found" you can find Bibles. I can't tell you how many versions of the Bible we have in there, Bible's galore that have been left on pews. We have umbrellas, we have raincoats, we have children that have been left since the night...no I'm just teasing [congregation laughter] heh, they're not really there. Heh, heh! A few people have tried to leave their children behind, but... [more laughter] I say all of that to say that...that the Bible a..., has a lost and found chapter just like we have a "Lost and Found" closet here at Prestonwood. And yet, it is my prayer that when you leave here tonight that you will understand that far beyond being a closet in this church that the height and width and breadth of this ministry is that all that we are and all that we do is filled with a series of adventures called lost and found and that you'll see that as we study together tonight.

Now, having talked about these lost and found things, let's read the parable and let's see the expression of this parable as we move forward. Let's begin in chapter 15, verse 4, Jesus said:

⁴"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing, ⁶and he comes home, and he calls together his friends and his neighbors and says, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost!'"

And so he goes from a little sheep that goes "Baa" and wanders away to another picture, and that picture picks up in verse 8:

⁸"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹And when she's found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me for I have found the piece that was lost.'"

It was one thing to have livestock. It was one thing to have animals. It

was another thing to have coins, things of silver and of gold. And so here is something of even increased value over the sheep and the woman has literally turned her house upside-down trying to find this coin. But then he goes on and He says in verse 11:

¹¹... "A certain man had two sons. ¹²And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods ~~that fail~~...that falls to me.' And so he divided them to his livelihood. ¹³And not many days thereafter, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living."

That is he went out and lived a wasted, prodigal lifestyle. And the Bible says:

¹⁴"But when he had spent all there, there arose a severe famine in the land and he began to be in want. ¹⁵And then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent with him to the fields to feed the swine."

Now here's a good Jewish boy who's out feedin the pigs, sloppin the hogs. And the Bible says:

¹⁶"And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything."

You see there was a point in this young man's life where he had all this money and wherever he went there was a party and everybody was a part of the party and he was buyin the rounds for everybody in the bar and he was throwin the scene and havin the party, but the Bible says when he got to the end and he was without anything, he'd got to the place, he was so hungry, he was living in want, but there wasn't anybody to come back and help him. The world's crowded, we're with you when you're up, but if you're down, you're down alone. Well, He goes on to say:

¹⁷"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough to spare, but I perish with hunger! ¹⁸I will arise and go to my father, and say to him. Father, I've sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

Of course the rest of the story is that the boy decided to go home and when he got home he had the surprise of a lifetime, a father who was there looking and a father who was there waiting. Now, as I read through these 3 scenarios, these 3 pictures that are painted here in this parable I can't help but feel the swing and the sway of emotion that goes back and forth. On the one hand there's a swing to a... an emotion of crisis and uncertainty, something's lost, it's gone...it's gone! But on the other hand the pendulum swings back and then it's found. On the one hand there's fear and...and crisis and on the other hand there's celebration and so it's almost as if you read through the chapter there's this swinging of the pendulum back and forth and emotions are changing and you're caught up in

reading and capturing the emotions of the moment. And in order to try to help us tonight to really capture the message of this motion and emotion, what I've decided to do is just take 3 words that express emotion and to let each of those 3 words sort of color the scene for us. **THREE EMOTIONS** and 3 motions that are seen in every scene. That's hard to say. What are they?

#1 **ANXIETY**, anxiety, the moment that you realize that something is lost there is an emotion called anxiety. If you've ever lost something of value, if as a parent there's ever been that split second when you did not know where your child was, if you've had a pet and the pet went outside and suddenly you realized the fence is open, the gate's open, there's that fear, that uncertainty, there's that anxiety and anxiety is one of the emotions that we see. It was true of the shepherds. It was true of the woman and it was true of the father. In every case there was this sense of anxiety and certainly anxiety is one of the common and the most debilitating of all emotions in our world today. I would suggest to you that in our western world and in America in particular, there is not any common emotion that is more reflected of who we are and what we struggle with socially than the issue of anxiety, because anxiety creates tension, it creates a sense of discomfort and in this scene it all begins with an uncertainty, a discomfort, because the Pharisees are anxious about the crowds that are with Jesus and Jesus turns the table to help them to see the anxiety of people who've lost something. And so this whole emotion of anxiety is all over the pages of Luke chapter 15 and yet I believe that that is the ultimate emotion that captures the essence of a lost world without God. Our world, because it is a lost world filled with lost people, is a world full of anxiety because we have no certainties apart from God. And therefore, while we are not all as bad as we can be in this world, there's some good people compared to some bad people, the fact of the matter is we're all as bad off as we can be in this world. Without Christ we are all lost and it's just a degree of how significant the expression of **LOSTNESS** is and how great the anxiety is in a person's life as they live their life without God.

Now, let me just pause here to very quickly just I...I just think this is a vital point for me to underscore and to teach and to emphasize with you tonight and that is that without God, man is lost. All of mankind, mankind is not sick, he's not struggling, he's not evolving, he is lost. And the impact of being lost creates an anxiety in his relationship with God, but it creates an anxiety in life. And because man without God is lost it means that he is **LOST INTELLECTUALLY**. We don't know how to think. We can't think right, we are confused, twisted, distorted in our thinking. That's exactly what Paul said in the book of Romans chapter 1 as he described the condition of the lost world. If I had to choose one passage of Scripture above all others to really lay out theologically what it looks like to be lost, it's Romans chapter 1 and Romans chapter 1 says that in this lost world man without God is lost intellectually. Listen to verse 20:

²⁰*For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes...*

That is God's attributes.

...are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that the world is without excuse, ²¹because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Verse 22:

Professing to be wise, they became fools,

We see this every day in our world. People with incredible intellectual ability, people teaching and serving in the highest educational institutions in the world and yet their reasoning is twisted and demented because they are intellectually lost if they don't start knowledge with God. The Bible says clearly and emphatically the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge and if you take God out of the picture then you are a fool. And by the way we're getting close to that national holiday, April 1st is just around the corner for those who are atheists. I thought you ought to know that. The fool has said in his heart there is no God. And so the Bible says that man without God is lost intellectually.

Not only is man without God lost intellectually, he's **LOST MORALLY**. You continue reading in Romans 1, verse 24:

²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

The Bible says that not only is man lost intellectually, he can't think straight because of this condition, he is lost morally and every day in my life and in this world I am amazed at the moral darkness of this world in which we live. Today I logged on MSN, front page, first thing that I saw was this:

"The new monogamy, cheating by the rules!"

Now what this article is about is a New York magazine that has done an article featured, entitled, *The New Monogamy*, that states that marriages are becoming more open. The thinking is, is that if you agree in the beginning that you will cheat it will ward off the urge to stray later on in the relationship and the whole article is a discussion about this new trend, this new way of life, this new monogamy, whereby people get married and then they sleep with whomever they want to there...ever thereafter. Now I want you to know that's not new monogamy, that's just the same old immorality and adultery that the Bible talks about, people are just trying to find a way to justify it. And the reason that that happens is because mankind is lost morally. So we're lost intellectually, we're lost morally..

And then the Bible tells us that we're **LOST EMOTIONALLY**. We can't get it together emotionally because there is a sense in which our passions, our affections are twisted and distorted. Again we go back to Romans, chapter 1 and we begin reading in verse 26:

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use of their bodies for what is against nature. ²⁷And likewise also men, having the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of the error which was due.

I didn't say that, God said that. I'm not intolerant; the Word of God speaks truth and the Bible says that homosexuality is a moral deviation from the plan of God, but it is an emotional damage to those who practice and participate in it. And so there is an emotional distortion that is true because our world is lost. So what does the world try to do? The world keeps trying to make sense of everything without God. The world tries to keep establishing standards without God. The world tries to keep feeling right without God and therefore the Bible tells us that man is not only lost intellectually, morally and emotionally.

He's **LOST SPIRITUALLY**. Look in verse 28, the Bible says here:

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things, which are not fitting;

And then look down in chapter 2 of Romans, verse 1:

¹Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ²But we know that all the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. ~~And if you do and if you, excuse me...~~³And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

There is a judgment spiritually on a lost world and that judgment is separation from God, not just in this life, but in the life to come. There is a judgment on the lost world and therefore man's greatest stress point is the separation that he has from God. There's anxiety, all over Luke 15, because something is lost. And yet that anxiety is reflected all through our world today, a world in convulsion and crisis and they don't know why, they're anxious. And why is this? Because they need the God of peace that they may have peace with God through our God...through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The second word that I would point out to you tonight is not only the emotion and the word anxiety, but it's the word **INTENSITY**. I really struggled to figure out how to describe this word to you, but it is an emotion. Intensity is an emotion, it's...it's depth of feeling, it's conviction, a..., it's a sense of determination, it's a sense of focus and

what we see in every one of these scenes is not only the anxiety of something that's lost and the impact of something being lost, there is also the sense of intensity where those go and seek to find that which is lost. And in that intensity there's a focus, there's a...a determination. There's...there's a sense of...of...of passion to find what's lost. And what ever word you really want to use to describe the emotion it's exactly what we see in the determined response and the active effort of an athlete in a moment of performance. I'm going to do this. I'm going to grit it. I'm going to get it. I'm going to find it! And that's exactly what we see. We see it with the shepherd, we see it with the woman and ultimately we see it in the heart of the father, a desire to recover, to reclaim, to renew that which has been lost. And with each case there is an escalating emotion of intensity. The shepherd goes out and finds the sheep and brings it back around his neck. The woman turns everything upside-down. It's gotta be here! It's gotta be here somewhere! And there's intensity, and then there's the intensity of a heartbroken father who knows that his son is out there somewhere and that father is apparently living and longing and looking for the day that he'll see that son again. That emotion of intensity is so very important because it is reflective of the mission and the ministry of our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus said, concerning His own ministry, in Matthew, chapter 18 and in verse 11:

~~*"For the Son of Man is come to seek, excuse me..."*~~

"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost."

Jesus said this is why I came into the world. I came to save what was lost. Because the world is helpless and hopeless apart from God I have come to redeem this world and therefore with all of the intensity that is required, that would be the intensity of His passion, the intensity of the love of God, the intensity of His suffering. Jesus came into the world to save a lost world and just as we see the shepherd seeking the sheep and the woman seeking the coin, we see a father seeking his son and over and over the beautiful picture that is here is the picture of our God who is a seeking God. It's been very vogue and very common in the last two decades, in the church growth movement in America to talk a lot about seekers, people who are seekers and how that we need to help and to be sensitive to seekers and I want you to know I really do believe we need to find people who are sincerely empty and seeking and we need to help them to find Christ. But I want you to know that the Bible does not portray man as being a seeker. In fact the Bible says clearly and emphatically in Romans 3, ~~verse 10~~: **[should be verse 11]**

...There is none who seeks after God.

But you know what the Bible does portray? That God seeks us in our lost and hopeless condition and that He seeks and searches us out in this life. It's one of the most incredible and one of the most beautiful pictures in all of the Bible and here Jesus is surrounded by prodigals, prodigals who have all sinned and stained and shamed themselves, but He's there because He's come seeking them to draw them to Himself that they might step out of

the realm of lostness and that they might know what it is to experience the intensity of the Father's love. And yet here's the contrast, here's the contrast of the shameful ~~circle~~...circle that are around Jesus and they've all come to Him and they're humble and they're broken, but on the other side here are the Pharisees and they're proud and they're living their own...by their own standards of righteousness and instead of humbly and gratefully responding to the love of God they are there criticizing those who have come to Him by His grace. The Bible reminds us that God resists the proud. You wanna know where God is intense? God is intense in His love, but He is also intense in resisting human pride and human effort that tries to substitute itself for humbling itself and calling upon the name of Jesus that we might be saved. There is an intensity with God that says I resist the proud, but with equal intensity He gives grace to the humble and so there is a beautiful picture of compassion and of forgiveness and of grace that is seen and that is poured out in this place. Of course, the greatest response to that grace is seen in the life of that boy, not in the sheep, not in the coin, but in the son. Do you remember what happened to the son? He was down in the pigpen. He's out there sloppin the hogs. He's where no respectable Jewish boy ought to be. He wakes up one day and he says, you know what? Even my father's servants have food. What am I doin? I've shamed my father, I've gotta go home and say I can't even be your son, but maybe he would let me be his servant. And the Bible says something happened in that boy's heart and everything that had caused him to run away from the father, he now turned around and came to the father. It's an incredible picture of repentance. What is repentance? It's me recognizing that I can't resist God and that I need to turn around and come to Him and experience His grace in my life. It is changing my mind that results in a change of life and it's the starting point for salvation, but it's also the starting point for spiritual renewal for us all. How do you have a revival in your life, even if you're a believer you have to come again and again to a place where you turn from sin and you turn to Christ, where you look back to the Father, to His love, to His grace.

Several years ago I was doing a chapel in a VBS when I was pastor in Florida and we gave the public invitation and a group of kids came forward and I went down and started to talkin to a little 9 year-old boy and I'll never forget this little boy looked up at me and I said...I said, tell me why have you come? And he looked up at me and he said pastor, he said I've been save, I've been baptized, but I've been sinnin a lot, heh, heh [congregation laughter] I've been sinnin a lot. Well, all I could think was, God give us a church who realizes the need time and time again to turn back to You, realizes the intensity of Your grace, of Your love, of Your forgiveness, but that we would come back again and again to the place of renewal and of grace in our lives. But, of course, before that can happen in the sense of a revival it's gotta happen at the point of salvation and really I think that's the beautiful picture of this boy, this boy who was loved of his father and rebelled and when away is now coming back, but he's coming back not to the punishment, but to God's love. But God uses things in life. God uses even intense things in our life to bring us back to Himself.

It was C. S. Lewis who said:

"Pain is God's megaphone. He whispers in our pleasure, but He shouts in our pain."

You goin through a hard time right now? Are you hurting? Well, maybe it's the part of the intensity of God at work in you to draw you close, to draw you in, to lift you up, to bring you to Him. There really is a reality with God in hardship that is unlike any other reality in life. The thing that I love here is that God meets the intensity of this broken young man's life with the love of the father. And I don't know of anything more intense than the picture that unfolds here when the boy gets up and starts going home and the Bible says that as he's comin down the road he's rehearsing his speech, he's saying father I've sinned against you, I'm no longer worthy to be called you son, he's thinking through what he needs to say and the Bible says that when he was still a far away off the father saw him and listen to this:

"...he ran to him..."

It takes some intensity to run doesn't it? It's not that hard to walk, but if we start running it takes some intensity and the beautiful picture of the intensity of God's love is seen in this passage of Scripture as He is running, the father running to meet this prodigal son.

Well, that takes me to the 3rd and the final emotion that I want you see tonight and it's not only the picture and the pallet of the emotion of anxiety, the anxiety that begins in the conflict, a social and...and religious conflict that's there at the beginning, to the conflict of emotions and anxiety of things that are lost, to the second level of emotion which is intensity, the determined effort to find and to bring back that which was lost and the intense expressions of love and grace that are all over the pages of this chapter. But there's one other emotion that you gotta see and that is the emotion of **JOY**, of joy. I've actually done some selective reading as I've been reading through this passage with you and so I wanna go back now and pick up where I've left off. If you go back in Luke and look in Luke 15, in verse 7, it says this:

"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who needs no repentance."

You look at the 99 sheep that's great, they're in the fold, but the joy in heaven is over the one that was lost and is now brought back. And then you look again in chapter 15 and verse 9 and the Bible tells us that when this woman finds the coin that she brings her neighbors together and says:

"...'Rejoice I found the piece that I lost!'"

And then it says in verse 10:

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Just as there was joy in the presence of the neighbors, the Bible says there's joy in the presence of the angels of heaven. Well who do the angels surround? It's the joy of the heart of God. And then the Bible goes on to say in chapter 15, in verse 32 that the father at the end of it all says:

"It is right that we should make merry and that we should be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, he was lost, but now he's found."

That's the Christian life, I'm dead in sin but now I'm alive. I'm lost but now I'm found. You see all of this chapter is a celebration of the grace of God and the incredible, inexpressible joy that comes. Well, we share the joy of the heart of the Father over things that are lost and things that are found. But having said all of that the sad thing is, is that that wasn't the only son. There was joy in the sheep, there was joy in the coin, there was joy in the son, but there was still another son. It was the older brother and the Bible tells us in the latter part of Luke 15 that this older brother heard the party going on for this son who had gone out and shamed his family and his father and the brother was ticked off; the brother was pouting, the brother finally got in the father's face and said I've been with you all these years and you've never thrown a party for me and yet this prodigal, this shameful son comes home and you throw a party for him. What's that all about dad? And then the story ends. That's it, it ends. We don't know what happened. We don't know if the brother ever got right. The Bible doesn't say and they lived happily ever after. The Bible just shows that the sad son came home and the son that you thought was the good son became a shame to his father. And I think in that picture Jesus is wrapping up the whole thing, because Jesus wants us to understand that in this lost world it is only by grace and always by grace that we are saved through faith. It's not of our righteousness, it's not of our goodness and the day that you begin to think that you deserve God's grace and God's goodness in your life is the day that God's gonna remind you that you are dependent upon Him for all that you are and all that you have. He's gonna correct that attitude in your life. That's exactly what He did with the Pharisees. You see the Pharisees were the older brother. That's the whole point of the whole story, the Pharisees were the older brother. They were the ones who were condemning the ones who had received love and grace and forgiveness.

Well you've been really kind to listen to me say all of this tonight. But I've got 4 more points to share [congregation laughter] and I'm gonna just quickly close with them. What does this parable need to say to our hearts tonight? We've seen the picture, we've felt the emotions, what is the parable saying?

1ST and foremost **GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE ARE GREATER THAN ALL OF OUR SINS.** His

love and grace is greater than all of our sins and tonight it doesn't matter who you are, where you are or what you've done you're not beyond God's love and grace in your heart. And I want you to know that the wonderful thing about our God is how great His love is, how intense, how faithful His love is for us.

2nd GOD RECEIVES, FORGIVES AND RESTORES SINNERS WHO COME TO HIM IN HUMILITY AND IN FAITH. That's why the gospel is such good news is that anyone who comes to Him in humility and faith, drawn by His love, pulled by His grace, but who respond in humility and faith, God receives them, forgives them and restores them.

#3 WE NEED TO SEE AND TO LOVE THIS LOST WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF A LOVING FATHER. God wants your heart and my heart to see and care about this world like He cares about this world. You see it's easy for us to put our eyes on all the people in this passage, but Jesus told it that so when it was all said and done our eyes would be on the Father. He wanted us to see with the Father's eyes, not through the people's eyes and that's how God wants us to live every day seeing a lost world through the eyes of a loving Father and therefore...

#4 WE NEED TO GUARD OUR HEARTS AND REPENT OF ATTITUDES THAT KEEPS US FROM REJOICING IN THAT WHICH GOD REJOICES. Are you rejoicing in the things that rejoice the heart of God or does your lack of joy break the heart of God? You know it's easy in a church like this for us to loose joy over the things that God has joy in. Oh we don't care that people are being saved and that lives are being changed, we're just worried about whether or not somebody got our parkin space, our seat or whether or not we got to hear who we wanted to hear on Sunday. You see that's when we loose joy over the things that God wants us to have joy over and as believers tonight there's an incredible sense of need to find joy in the things that bring joy to the heart of God.

So this story about a father is a story filled with emotion and filled with expression of something that can make a difference in your life and in my life tonight.