

FINDING THE LOST ---CONCERN FOR THE LOST

Luke 15: 1-10

- Slide When the tsunami struck the Kenyan coast on Dec. 26.
a baby hippopotamus was washed away from its mother down the Sabaki River into the Indian Ocean and then forced back to shore
A Hippopotamus is a social creatures.
Baby hippo's stay with their mother for four years,
So being separated from its mother traumatized this baby.
It was lost. The Rangers nicknamed him Owen the 650 Pd hippo.
- Slide It needed a surrogate mother and fortunately
it landed on the giant male century-old Tortoise.
Owen followed that Tortoise like it would his own mother.
- Slide They swim, eat, and sleep together.
If somebody approaches the tortoise,
the hippo becomes aggressive,
as if protecting its biological mother,"
What a pair they make.
Hippo's aren't the only things that get lost.

SLIDE 800,000 CHILDREN ARE MISSING EVERY YEAR.

- One child every 40 seconds.
1000 a day are abducted by family members,
400,000 run away from home.
50,000 are abducted by strangers
They are not just out late.
Or having a sleepover.
Or off to camp
- Slide These children are missing.
Lost from their homes, playgrounds, and backyards.
This has forced our nation to set up an AMBER ALERT.

- As sad as that seems to be.
There is a darker side to life and loss.
- Slide Of the 6 billion people who are in the world
2.1 billion people profess to be Christians,
leaving 4 billion people who are spiritually lost.
Do we need an AMBER ALERT for those lost in spiritual darkness?
Jesus came to seek and to save the lost in the whole world.
Not just to save Christians.
And he needs our help.
So today I want us to think seriously about the lost.

SLIDE WHO ARE THE LOST?

¹Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. ²But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

SLIDE From this verse we see that everyone knows
the Tax collectors and sinner were lost.
 We know and they know, and Jesus knew and
 the Pharisees and teachers of the law knew
 Tax collectors and sinners were outside of the covenant of God.
 They were outsiders.
 When I talk with people on the street in Aberdeen, or Bismarck,
 who are not living as God intended
 They know it.
 I have heard many say: "I know I'm lost."
 I've had more that one person says: "I know I'm going to hell when I die."
 They know they live outside the family of God.

But what is more tragic is those who are lost and don't know it.
 Maybe out of ignorance or just pride.

A young and foolish pilot wanted to sound cool on the aviation frequencies.
 This was his first time approaching a field during the nighttime,
 and instead of making any official requests to the tower,
 he said, "Guess who?"
 The tower controller simply switched off the landing field lights and replied,
 "Guess where!"

The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law.
 Knew who they were,
 But they were unaware of where they were in the kingdom of God.
 They were Lost in their religious boasting.
 Lost in their laws, and religious rules and half-truths.

What is sad is that million of people today are in this condition.
 Theologian, Jack Shea says, even the ninety-nine were lost in some way.
 Even when we appear to be a part of the flock, and sit in church on Sunday morning.
 Many when they look inside find that they
 are in some way lost and needing to be found.
 That is why Jesus came and said:

SLIDE **I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father buy by me.
 If you have seen me you have seen the father also. John 14:6-7**

SLIDE **LETS LOOK AT THE
 I. HOW WE ARE LOST**

**³Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep
 and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go
 after the lost sheep until he finds it? Luke 15:3-4**

SLIDE **This shepherd was lost when his circle was broken.
 He even may have been at wits end.**
 When the "perfect number" of one hundred sheep becomes ninety-nine,
 they are not whole until the lost sheep is found. And 100 are restored.

SLIDE When the woman with the perfect number of ten coins loses one,
she can only find joy with her neighbors
When "10" has been restored.

SLIDE When the Father with the two sons has lost
one to greed and debauchery,
and one to resentment and jealousy,
He doesn't stop to rejoice when only one son is found,
But goes outside to talk with the elder son.
Because he cannot celebrate in joy until two sons are restored to him.
In a sense the woman, the shepherd, and the father are lost to their search.
For wholeness.

SLIDE Ask any family that has lost a loved one
Be it from a missing child to a soldier in Iraq
They will say- "We're just lost!"
The family of those lost miners, and those still missing in the bridge collapse
Will be lost for many months to come.

SLIDE **1. WE CAN BE LOST IN UNBELIEF:**
Amidst a flood of tears a couple came and asked me:
"What can we do about our son?"
They had attempted to raise their children in the Christian faith,
But when their oldest son went to college, he cast it all aside.
He told his parents he wanted nothing to do with God anymore.
She said: "All we can do I pray for our son".
Here is a lost son.
But here also is a lost family.
They don't know what else to do.

SLIDE For all us who have loved ones who are not Christians today
We feel a sense of loss.
It is a heart-wringing story.
We pastors hear it all too often.
Young people leaving behind their faith?
Not just students, but spouses.

Are you lost in unbelief?
Have you lost that peace of mind?
And assurance of spirit that you are a child of God
Have you lost the sense of God's presence with you?
We can be lost in unbelief and Carelessness.

SLIDE **2. WE CAN BE LOST IN OUR BUSY ROUTINES OR SCHEDULES**

We don't have to be a sheep in the wilderness,
or a youth in the college dorm to be lost.

Like a coin, we can get lost in your own home,

SLIDE like Martha, who was lost in her house.
 How many of us have been to a party where the host is so busy with all of
 the details that the guests leave the party thinking,
 “That was a lovely party, but I didn’t even see the host to thank her.”

Are you lost in your home, your world of
 Fussing over the perfect table setting,
 Adjusting the ingredients of the food endlessly,
 Making sure of the assigned seating.
 But missing the pleasure of enjoying your husband and children.
 Missing the wonder years
 Missing the plan Jesus has for you life today.
 Maybe Jesus is saying to us
 We need to let the dishes soak in the sink
 So we can soak in the savior.

SLIDE **3. LOST IN OUR WEALTH AND LUXURY**

The sheep gets lost when the grass came be deepest.
 It finds green grass, and began to eat its way out from the flock.
 Its head is down; its body is feasting,
 It can’t believe its luck at finding this banquet,
 So rejoicing over its good fortune it eats its way out into the darkness.
 Until it looks up and discovers it is alone, and its dark and its lost.

Are you and I in America, lost in our wealth and worldliness?
 Think of it this way,

SLIDE Suppose you are locked in a room with no windows and doors.
 No matter how nice the room is furnished
 You quickly become bored and suffer claustrophobia.
 We began to probe the walls and floors looking for a way to escape.
 Life is smothering us.

SLIDE But suppose you are in a castle with a thousand and one luxurious rooms,
 Each room filled with surprises and pleasures.
 You tire of one room and move to the next, and the next,
 Indefinitely exploring the castle wonders.
 So absorbed are we in our search that we never notice that the castle,
 Like the little room, has neither windows nor doors.
 It never occurs to us that you are equally a prisoner in the castle.
 We never think about escape.

SLIDE **Who is more captive?**
 the one in the room or the castle?
 We can be lost in our wealth and possession, our lifestyles.

SLIDE **4. LOST IN OUR EMOTIONS OF LOVE OR HATE**

Like the Older brother
 Have we not all allowed our emotions to get the best of us.
 Angry because we were slighted and overlooked.

SLIDE Hating because someone took our joy.
Disgusted because someone offended our sensibility.
Or maybe we just “lost it” in losing our keys or cell phone.

In the novel "The Great Hunger," a newcomer comes to a farm community.
He refuses all friendship with his neighbors and puts out the no trespassing sign.
One day a little child from the town climbs underneath his fence to pet his dog.
The vicious animal leaps on her and kills her.
Hostility spreads throughout the community.
When the newcomer comes to town no one will speak to him.
Clerks refuse to wait on him.
Spring comes and the merchants refuse to sell him seed.
Finally, the father of the girl who was killed comes over and sows his field.
This act of kindness is too much for the insufferable newcomer.
"Why did you of all people, sow my field?" he asks.
The father responds: To keep God alive in my heart.

We can be lost in our hate and anger,
As long as you hate you will never be whole.
No, it won't be easy, it never is to put anger away.
The Bible wisely says,

**SLIDE "Better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with hatred" (Proverbs 15:17).
Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).**

We could go on and one
Lost in our worry
Lost in our defeat
Lost in our grief.
But the worst loss is to be LOST IN OUR SIN

SLIDE **5 LOST IN OUR OWN WAY**

Like the prodigal son—lost in having and going his own way.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6

A college student recently wrote Billy Graham.
I took an adult course in religion, and to my surprise, the professor claimed that most things in the Old Testament didn't really happen but are just stories people made up. Is he right?

A: I too am surprised by what your professor said, because very few scholars who have seriously studied the Old Testament would agree with him. A few generations ago, some might have made such a sweeping claim -- but not today. One reason is because of the vast number of discoveries that archaeologists have made during the last century -- discoveries that repeatedly confirm the historical accuracy of the Bible.

I hope the Bible will remain important to you, and that you will never lose your confidence in it, for it is still God's Word -- regardless of what some people suggest. Jesus put it succinctly: "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

We can be lost when follow our own sinful way.
 BUT JESUS DOESN'T LET US END IN THE DARKNESS OR IN THE DUST
 He moves us to discover and trust in a

SLIDE II. A GOD WHO FINDS THE LOST

**SLIDE Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.
 'And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' Luke 15:6.9
 The father says: Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. Luke 15:23-24**

We have a God who is in the business of finding lost things.
 God has a passion and joy for finding lost things.
 This is what the Pharisees and scribes simply don't get.
 They're too busy worrying about whose supposed to be left out and excluded.
 They don't seem to get it that when someone lost comes home,
 joy is the result.
 Wholeness and inclusion produce joy for anyone with a heart open to embrace it.
 When a sinner come home God rejoices.

**I love to use my metal detector.
 I go out and find things.
 Lots of things.
 Some things are worthless.
 Like foil and pop tabs, and aluminum bolts.
 And there are millions of them.
 But there are also rings and pins
 There are dimes and quarters and some 50 cents pieces.
 But the biggest thing I always find is a sense of satisfaction.**

**Nothing gives God more satisfaction
 Then a sinner come home.**
 The more we understand the ideal of lost.
 The more joy we find in being found.

SLIDE Luke writes: "And when he finds the lost sheep, he puts it on his shoulders with great joy."
 Do you know what it feels like to be carried?
 Do you know what it feels like to be found?
 After your life has been empty?
 After your heart has been broken,

You soul has been shattered.

Do you know what its like to feel the arms of almighty God around you lifting you up?

SLIDE

⁷I 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

¹⁰In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:7,10

The thing that satisfies the heart of God more than anything,

Is a Sinner come home.

Home to peace,

Home to forgiveness,

Home to wholeness and purpose.

Nothing in all the world could bring the families of those miners more joy, than finding the ones who were lost.

SLIDE

That is the message to us today:

We have a God who finds missing people.

And he needs you to help him?

Will you bring your brother or sister to Jesus?

Will you bring your co-worker to Jesus?

Will you bring your son or daughter to Jesus?

THEN LET HE PARTY BEGAN.