

Lost And Found

Pastor James Richards

15 September 2024

Anyone else?

Okay, quiet group this morning. Let's. I will just report a little bit on the conference we went to in Nashville. Keith and Kristen Getty put it on. It's called sing with an exclamation point.

And it was basically on worship. And there were 6000 of us at the conference. Wonderful music. They really focus and emphasize on songs that have content, really focusing on what Christ has done for us, who he is and how we can trust him. And it was good.

Keith and Kristen Getty, I think they're most known for the song and Christ alone, my hope is found. And I didn't realize this, but they're from Northern Ireland.

Yeah, and Northern Ireland. And Keith Getty wrote that song on the back of electrical bill that just came to him and he wrote that out. They, like so many musicians today, live in Nashville. Now. That's musicians paradise, Nashville, Colorado.

But one of the things that really encouraged me, I was really amazed at how many young families were at the conference with their kids and there to spend a few days worshipping the Lord. So that was really encouraging.

That was his. Okay. Yeah, they're coming out with a new hymn book next year that going to have a lot of new and focusing on scripture songs because the content that's in that, that really points to Christ and not fluff that sometimes we often sing. So.

[ShepherdsStream.com](https://www.ShepherdsStream.com)

Okay, well, great.

It was good to be there. So with that, let's stand for the reading of God's word. We're going to read a familiar story this morning. In fact, someone has mentioned this is probably the most popular short story in the world, and we know it as the parable of the prodigal son. The prodigal son in Luke, chapter 15, verse eleven.

And Christ, having already talked about lost sheep and lost coins, now is going to talk about a lost son. And he said, there was a man who had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, father, give me the share of property that is coming to me. And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country. And there he squandered his property and reckless living.

And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his field to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate. And no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread.

But I perish here with hunger. I will rise and go to my father, and I will say to him, father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. And he arose and came to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, bring quickly the best robe and put it on him. And put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet and bring the fattened calf and kill it. And let us eat and celebrate.

For this my son was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. And he began to celebrate. Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the

house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

And he said to him, your brothers, come, and your father has killed the fattened calf. And because he received him back safe and sound, but he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him. But he answered his father, look, these many years I have served you and never disobeyed your command. Yet you never gave me a young goat that I might celebrate with my friends.

But when this son of yours came who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him. And he said to him, son, you're always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was, celebrate and be glad. For this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and found.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you, as our heavenly Father, that you love us. We thank you for the blessings you poured into our lives. We confess, Father, we've often squandered those blessings. But when we come back to you, God, you still love us.

You celebrate the fact that we've returned to you and entered into that relationship again. I pray, Father, that you would open our hearts to receive this word, see your great love for us and to respond to that love in a way that causes you to celebrate. And so we thank you for speaking to our hearts today by your spirit. And so, Lord, we pray as Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever.

Amen. You maybe see it. And again, welcome.

As I mentioned, this is national back to church day. And I pray that all over our nation there are people who have maybe been missing for a while who felt the need to come back into church. Speaking of getting back, Sandra and I just got back from Nashville,

where we attended that conference. And the conference was good. The rest of the trip was so.

So Sandra got Covid and had to go to the hospital. I got a severe chest cold. We were wondering if we were going to be able to fly last Wednesday, but we did do that, and of course, we're here. One good thing that came out of that trip is I learned how to find things, things that are lost. Okay.

My son in law is in tech, and so he's got all the newest and latest gadgets. And he told me about air tags, airtags, what are those? He said, that's things you put on your keys, you put on your dog, you put on your wife if you want. And you look on your phone and it shows you exactly where it's at. And he gave an example with his wife's phone.

It not only showed where wife's phone was at in the house, it was showing what direction it was pointed. And so airtags, I might have to get one of those and to put on the keys because it's frustrating looking for things that are lost, isn't it? Sometimes I feel like I spend half my life looking for things that are lost. And that, of course, is a waste of time. Well, with that in mind, let's look at things that were lost but found in Luke, chapter 15.

And we just read that, but I invite you to follow along. There are three parables there. First of all, the parable of the lost sheep. The sheep foolishly wandered off and got lost, but the master went looking for it. Then there was the coin that was lost, no fault of its own.

But of course, the woman searched the house and found the coin. And then the lost son that we're going to look with today in all three of these parables, when the sheep, the coin, and the son are lost, there is a great celebration in heaven. A great celebration. And the truth is, our savior, Jesus Christ, came to seek and to save that which was lost. Every one of us were lost in our sins, and yet Jesus came to seek you and I to find us and bring us back to the father.

So I want to look at that because it resulted in a great celebration. A great celebration. And there's great celebration in heaven whenever I, a sinner turns to the Lord and is

found. So we're going to look at it before we look at this story in detail, we have to look at the context. And that's back in chapter 13, verse 22 and 23.

And Jesus was talking about the narrow door. He says in verse 22, he went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, lord, with those who are saved, be few. That's a legitimate question. How many are going to be saved?

Will it be many or will it be few? And he said to them, strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able to. Many will seek to enter and not be able to because the door is narrow. And it forces us to ask the question, why can't they enter the narrow door?

Why are there so few that actually do enter the door? What do we have to do to make sure that we get through that door that leads to salvation? I believe the parable of the lost son answers these questions to us. So let's take a look at him. And the word prodigal isn't here, but that's what we call it.

Prodigal means wasteful. This son end up wasting his life. So I want to see just a few points here that I think can apply to our lives as far as getting through that narrow door to salvation. First of all, the lost son points out the true nature of the sin that is found in each one of us. The lost son points out the true nature of the sin that is in every one of us.

After the father gave the son his inheritance, we're told in verse 13, not long after that, the younger son got all together. He had set off for a distant country, and there squandered his wealth and wild living. Squandered his wealth and wild living. And what we see here is the essence of sin, the true essence of sin in everyone's life. I know for a fact, and I know this because I struggle also.

We all struggle with the concept of sin. We know the verse, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And. Oh, yeah, that's right, we've all sinned. I know we've sinned.

I. But we struggle with that because in our minds, we think of sin as doing bad things. You do bad things, that's sin. When you're sinning, you're doing bad things. And obviously doing bad things is sin.

But most of us, when we think about those bad things, who do we think of? Others. The bad things they do, they're worse than I am. I don't do as bad of things as they do. So really, even though I know I'm a sinner, I'm not that bad of a sinner.

Well, the younger son kind of blows that concept out of the water, because what was he guilty of? The younger son sinned because of his desire to be independent of Goddesse and to live his life the way he wanted to live it. He did not want to come under the authority of his father. As a result of that, it says that he left for a far country, and in his mind, in that far country, I can do whatever I want to do. If I want to live a wild life, I can live it.

The father won't be there to make me feel guilty. I'll just do whatever I want to do. Instead of pleasing the father, he wants to live to please himself. He does that by going off to a far country where he squanders his wealth. Everything the father had given, he loses.

Our passage doesn't tell us this, but if you read between the lines, it's easy to see that the son didn't like living under the father's authority. And that's true of all of us. When we come into the world, I want to do it my way and not the father's way. And we struggle with that, Isaiah tells us, and it's true of every one of us. Before we come to Christ, all we like sheep, have gone astray, and that's true of every one of us, and that's our sin.

Yeah, we do bad things, but we do them because we have gone astray from the father not wanting to be under his authority. Second thing the philosopher points out are the true consequences of the sin that is found in each one of us. There are always consequences of sin. After he left the father, it says, he spent everything he had, and we have a tendency to do that. But what he wasn't counting on was a severe famine.

He's probably thinking, I can spend it. I can go make it again. I'll be okay. But a famine came on the land as a result of that. It put him in need.

We see the result of that in verse 15, it says, so he went and he hired himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. To feed pigs. If you don't want to serve the father, you're going to serve Satan. And it may seem like everything's fine, wild living, having a great time. But sooner or later, the resources run out, and sooner or later, a famine in your life will come.

It might not come till the end of your life, but it will come. And you will be need. I think we've all heard the term pigout. Everyone knows that. What means, right?

If you've ever been around pigs, they are voracious eaters. I remember helping a farmer once butcher a sheep. And when we got done, he took the carcass and he threw it into the pig pen. And I have never seen such voracious eaters in my life. Everything was gone, including the bones.

In a matter of minutes, they ate it up. They devoured it. There was nothing left. And if we are not living for the father, we're going to serve Satan, who will send us out the field, feed the pigs. At the end of your life, there will be nothing left.

It will all be gone. If you live in that far country, sooner or later a famine will come. Your life, a need that you can't meet. And that will leave you in a place where you just long to have what other people are also having. If we're in that far country, it means we're lost.

And sooner or later, you'll have a need that no one can help you with. And feeding the pigs eventually leaves you longing for the true food that satisfies the soul, that only God can satisfy in your heart. And so that's the consequences of leaving the father. Third, the lost son points out the true path back to the father. And this is what's important.

We need to know how to get to the father. And we see several steps here that the son takes. First of all, it says in verse 17, he came to his senses. He came to his senses. I

don't know about you, but there have been times in my life where I was in that far country, living wildly, wasting my resources, and finally came to my senses.

What in the world am I doing? This isn't working out. You know, there's got to be a better way. And the sun came to that. I see people all the time making sinful, hurtful choices, and I want to say to them, how's that working out for you?

Not working out good. And what they need to do is come to their senses. Isaiah calls to us. Come now. Let us reason together.

And if we would do that, if we'd actually reason about our circumstances, we'd realize it was so much better my father's house than it is out here in this far country. If we do that, I believe we'd realize that God's ways are good ways.

Second, he made the decision to go back to his father, and it was a choice he made. He could stay where he's at and try to make the most of it. But he decided, no, I'm going to go back to the father. In the same way, when we come to that place, we realize it's so much better. We have to make that decision to go to the father.

Third, he was willing to confess his sin to his father. In verse 18, he says, but they all alike begin to, oops, I'm in the wrong chapter there. Verse 18, he says, I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. And this is where so many people stumble. They realize they're in need.

They reason, this isn't good. I think I'll go back to my father. But then they stumble over the area of confession. They are not willing to confess their sins, that they have sinned against heaven and against the father, and they go no further as a result of that. They end up making excuses instead of owning the problem and confessing it to the father.

And again, this, I believe, is one of the major hang ups that keeps people from really coming to Christ. Whether it's pride or fear or ego, they're afraid to confess their sins and get it out in the open where God can deal with it. James 5:16 tells us, therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective, and I can't even begin to share the times that I've seen prodigals that came back to the father, and they were in such a state that all they could do was cry out, oh, forgive me. They weren't making excuses.

They weren't trying to hide anything. They just wanted the problem dealt with. And there's something about confessing that sin to another believer who's righteous, who will pray for you, that's going to help you to return to the father. And so he understood he needed to do that. And then in verse 19, he knows he does not deserve his father's forgiveness or love.

He says, I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. And what that shows us in going back to the father, we're going to have to humble ourselves. We're not going back because we deserve his blessings or benefits. He already gave them to us and we wasted them all.

We can go back and pray that he would be merciful to us, a sinner, and humble ourselves before God and trust him to pour out his grace in our life. And then the last thing it says, he gets up and he goes back to the father. He does it. He acts on what God was asking him to do. And when we do that, we're going to see the result of that.

He came to his senses, he swallowed his pride, he humbled himself and he went back to the father. And that's all it takes for you and I to experience the results of God's love for you and I. So that leads to the last thing the lost son reveals, the love of the father. And many have made a big deal of the fact that when the father sees the son from afar off and he sees him coming, it indicates that he knows where the son has been. He could have gone and tried to intervene, but he did not.

He was praying and waiting and watching. And finally he sees the Son comes. It says that he was filled with compassion. Filled with compassion. Whenever we set our hearts going back to the father, you can be certain that he is a compassionate God.

He's not going to beat you down. And, oh, you wasted everything I gave you. You're not worth anything. No, he is a compassionate, loving father. He runs to him, he

throws his arms around him and he kisses him.

And then we see several times that he celebrates the fact that his son, who is lost, is found. His son, who is as good as dead, is now alive. When the younger brother gets upset about him receiving the younger son, the father proclaims, but we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and found. And again, that's why Jesus came into the world.

The secret was lost so they could be found by the Father, so they could be restored to relationship with him. Whenever anyone truly believes that Christ is the way, the truth and the life that only through him can we come to the Father. When they confess their sins, they repent of the direction in their life and they make a commitment. I'm going back to the Father. God receives them, adopts them back into the family, restores them the blessings that were lost.

And it says that he celebrates over and over. You see that for every sinner that repents and comes back to Christ. There is a celebration with the lost sheep. It says, just so I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents and over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance with a lost coin. Just so I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

And you think about that. God in heaven who needs nothing, receives joy whenever one of his lost children is found and comes back to him and that relationship is restored. I don't know about you, but I've had the opportunity to deal with a lot of prodigals over my life and ministry. People that were way out there in sin, they were lost. And no one would have questioned the fact that they were lost.

And when they came to their senses and realize God's ways are good ways, I'll return to the father. And it's an amazing thing to see a life turned around, a life that was headed to destruction through the wild, living a life that was in need. And when they come back to the father, he kisses them, he embraces them, he kills the fatted calf. He provides for them. And I would submit there's no greater joy in life than seeing that happen to people that you care about.

And I could mention a lot of people that I've seen and some here that were prodigals that lived in that far country and wasting their life. And yet somehow God the father brought them to that place where they wanted to come to him. I'll just mention one in particular and a guy named Rick Main. Some of you knew him, and he's dead now. He's with the Lord.

But 31 years ago, I came out of my office going to go to a Bible study, forgot something, came back in, and there was a lady standing in a hallway. Scared me. Where'd she come from? And turns out she and her husband were right here in the church. We didn't lock the church back in those days.

And she said, my husband wants to give his life to God. I said, oh. So we came in, we visited and shared salvation with him. He prayed to receive the Lord. He had been hiding in a trailer for the previous year up in paradise estates because he had stolen \$30,000 from a drug dealer and had a contract out on his life.

They were looking to kill him. They were out of Tacoma. He really hated the Harley days because a lot of those guys on Harleys were out of some of those gangs. And he would hide and he had been on drugs that whole year he had not worked. And he finally told his wife, I can't take any more of this.

He had a grandmother who had been a believer. I can't take any more of this. I'm going to go to the nearest church and find God. And we were the nearest church. We were the only church in Coppelas, still are.

And he came to Christ and God took that man. He'd been in prison, he'd been on drugs, he was a thief, he was a violent man. And he completely changed his heart. And such a soft and tender heart of caring about other people and just rejoice over seeing God when that prodigal who is lost is found. And I would submit there's nothing greater than any of us can do than somehow be involved in reaching out to those who are lost.

It might mean just saying a kind word, doing a kind deed, showing the love of Christ to someone, helping them come to their senses, not beating them down with the Bible or message, but being there for him. And that's something that anyone can do. And I

think that comes out of a desire of the heart. Oh, God, I want to be involved some way. I want to be a part of that celebration.

And it is a celebration not just in heaven, but here on earth. And so the point here is that the father is looking for people. Now, I want to go back to the context. Said the narrow door. Why can't they get through the narrow door?

Another place he talks about. It's easier for a camel to go through an eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved. And the fact is, the door is so narrow, you can't take anything with you in it, no baggage allowed. You can't take your pride, you can't take your lusts, you can't take your sin, you can't take anything. You have to want to get through that door so much that you're willing to leave everything else behind.

That's the reason so many don't enter. There's things that they still hold on to. I won't give that up. As a result of that, they can't go in. And because it's got to be all Christ, you can't go back to the father demanding anything from him.

It's just the grace of God. The beautiful thing is, once we get through that narrow door or on that narrow way, it says it leads to eternal life. What a great road to be on. And it's narrow and sometimes it's hard, but it's going somewhere that will last for eternity. And so as we see the lost son, first of all we should acknowledge I was lost.

But thank God, even though I was in a far country, that he revealed his love to me and he showed me that I could come back to him through Christ. And if you have, and yeah, we go through hard things. We're going through some hard things here in the church. A lot of people sick and I facing things. But we can still celebrate because we know the father loves us.

We know the father has given us eternal life. We know that we have a hope and future in life. If you're in that far country, start to realize what it leads to. It will lead to need and it will lead to famine. And the only hope is to come back to the father.

Let's pray to father. I thank you that you have actively sought us out, Lord, when we came to that place of realizing that we were lost in our sins, that we were in need of

salvation, that only Christ could provide, that I pray that you would help us and especially those who maybe haven't made that decision to reason it out, to come to our senses that in Christ, Lord, all the riches of the universe are ours through him. And then, Lord, that we would make that decision to return to him our father who created us and gave us life. God, that we'd repent of our sins, we'd humble ourselves before him and we'd allow you to embrace us and become part of the celebration of a sinner who was saved. Thank you for this.

In Christ's name, amen.