

**“Lost and Found”**  
***Identifying Those Who Are Lost***  
**(Luke 15: 1-2; 11-13; 17-18; 25-30)**  
**May 28,2017**

**15** Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. **2** This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

**11** To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons.

**12** The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

**13** “A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living.

**17** “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! **18** I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you,

**25** “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, **26** and he asked one of the servants what was going on. **27** ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’

**28** “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, **29** but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. **30** Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

**INTRODUCTION:**

- This passage is commonly known, preached and taught as “The Prodigal Son.”
- A FULLER UNDERSTANDING of this parable requires realizing:
  - The CIRCUMSTANCES that prompted Jesus to tell them
  - The FULL CONTEXT in which this last of THREE was told
  - The TARGET of these parables was the SCRIBES and PHARISEES

### **SERIES: KNOWING HIM AND MAKING HIM KNOWN**

- Our THEME for this year
- Today: “LOST AND FOUND” *Identifying Those Who Are Lost.*

### **Ponder this...**

#### **Nicodemus: John Chapter 3:**

- A religious man
- Living a morally clean, righteous life
- Committed beyond many to honoring God with all his life
- Believing in the Law, Prophets and the Writings all his life

#### **A 22 year old young man:**

- Grew up devoted to his religious heritage/denomination
- Read through the NT in Grammar and High School
- Believed that Jesus lived; died on the cross for his sins; rose from the dead the third day; ascended into heaven; sits at the Father’s right hand; and is coming again to judge the earth.

### **Question: Were they lost or saved?**

#### **I. UNDERSTANDING THREE PARABLES IN CONTEXT:**

The Lost Sheep: Lost OUTSIDE the fold.

The Lost Coin: Lost INSIDE the house.

The Lost Sons: One lost OUTSIDE the house; the other lost INSIDE the house.

- The TARGET of this set of three parables was the SCRIBES and PHARISEES
  - The YOUNGER son represented the PULICANS, NOTORIOUS SINNERS that came to hear Jesus and eat with him (Build Relationship)
  - The OLDER son represented the SCRIBES and PHARISEES that were murmuring and complaining about Jesus’ accepting those “REJECTS”

#### **A TWO-FOLD DEMONIC PLAN:**

### **Younger Son:**

- Drawn away by his own lustful desires and ENTICED

Ephesians 2:2 (NLT)

**2** You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world.[a] He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

### **Elder Son:**

**That same spirit works to corrupt those on the INSIDE through the operation of a RELIGIOUS SPIRIT.**

## **II. FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A RELIGIOUS SPIRIT: (Evidenced by the Elder)**

- 1. Views God as a COLD, HARSH, DISTANT TASK MASTER:**
  - a. The DECEPTION that God will love us more the more perfectly we live our lives
  - b. He doesn't love us more when we pray, read our bibles or attend church
  - c. HE LOVES US BECAUSE HE CHOOSES TO
  - d. WE DO THOSE THINGS BECAUSE WE KNOW HE LOVES US, NOT TO MAKE HIM LOVE US MORE
  - e. These people STRUGGLE to develop an intimate relationship with Jesus
- 2. Develops TRADITIONS and FORMULAS to accomplish spiritual goals:**
  - a. Love, Grace and Relationship are keys to spiritual growth
  - b. It's about BEING, NOT DOING
  - c. **NOW are we the sons of God; but we are growing and developing more and more to be like Jesus. We won't be more sons the more we do; we'll be sons who look more like Jesus!**
- 3. Develops a HARSH, JUDGMENTAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS SINNERS:**
  - a. They act as if they would become CONTAMINATED if they had contact with "sinners"!
- 4. They become JOYLESS, CYNICAL AND HYPOCRITICAL**
  - a. They SOUR from WITHIN
  - b. Genuine joy and love are a THREAT to them; it exposes them in STARK CONTRAST to those experiencing it!
- 5. A religious spirit REFUSES TO ACCEPT CHANGE:**

- a. They REFUSE to SHIFT with God in NEW DIRECTIONS HE IS LEADING IN
- b. They become INFLEXIBLE in their METHODS
- c. They become OLD WINESKINS that God CANNOT USE!

**Question:**

**Did the Elder son think he was more righteous than his father? More moral?  
HOW CAN WE REJECT WHAT THE FATHER HAS ACCEPTED?**

**ELDER SON REPRESENTS THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES:**

Matthew 15:8 (NLT)

‘These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

**NOTE:**

**HOW FAR AWAY WAS THE YOUNGER FROM THE FATHER WHEN HE WAS IN THE PIG STYE?**

**HOW FAR WAS THE ELDER SON FROM THE FATHER WHEN HE WAS IN THE HOUSE?**

**POINT:**

**SOME SINNERS ARE IN THE PIG STYE.  
SOME SINNERS HAVE THE PIG STYE IN THEM!**

**III. WHICH SON WILL EVANGELIZE WITH THE TRUE MESSAGE OF THE FATHER?**

**ELDER: (Scribes and Pharisees)**

- RULES, REGULATIONS, LEGALISM
- THEY HAD AN “EVANGELISM PROGRAM”

Matthew 23:15 (NLT)

**15** “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you cross land and sea to make one convert, and then you turn that person into twice the child of hell you yourselves are!

**Question:**

**Is it possible that there are people today, ruled by a religious spirit proclaiming a false gospel?**

**YOUNGER:**

## LOVE, GRACE, RESTORATION, FREEDOM

### CONCLUSION:

#### WHO ARE THE LOST?

- They are people **OUTSIDE** in the pig sty that the Father is waiting to return to him.
- They're a **MESS!** They **SMELL!** They **DRESS WRONG!** They haven't learned to speak **CHRISTIANESE** yet.
- **THESE ARE THE 'DOWN-AND-OUTERS'**
- **BUT THEY ARE WELCOMED BY THE FATHER WITH OPEN ARMS**
  
- They are people **INSIDE**, with the pig sty **IN THEM!**
- **THE FATHER IS PLEADING WITH THEM TO COME IN AND JOIN THE CELEBRATION**
- These are the **UP-AND-OUTERS**

#### FATHER'S HEART: (v31)

Luke 15:31-32 (NLT)

**31** "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. **32** We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

### EPILOGUE:

- The parable ends without concluding the elder son's decision
- It is the end of the passage, but may not be the end of the story...
- We are left with the **ELDER SON ON THE DOORSTEP OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE;**
  - Like the Lame Man left daily at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. (Acts 3)
  - He **COULDN'T** go in because he was lame **EXTERNALLY**
  - The Elder son **WOULDN'T GO IN**, because his **DIBILITY WAS INTERNAL**
  - The will of the Father was that **BOTH** would **COME INTO HIS HOUSE**
  - **THEY BOTH SHOULD HAVE BEEN WALING, LEAPING AND PRAISING GOD TOGETHER WITH THE FATHER!**
  - **THE MAN IN ACTS 3 REACHED OUT FOR "CHANGE" AND RECEIVED TRANSFORMATION!**

**Question:**

**What does Nicodemus and that 22 year old young man need? They needed to be BORN AGAIN. I WAS THAT 22 year old young man. I was the Up and Outer; I was lost, but NOW, I AM FOUND!**

**WHAT ABOUT YOU?**

- **IF YOU'RE "STUCK IN THE MUD"; COME HOME**
- **IF THE "MUD'S STUCK IN YOU"; COME IN – REACH OUT FOR TRANSFORMATION TODAY!**