

The Wonderful Salvation in the Gospel of Luke

And He told them a parable saying, Which man of you, who has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he finds it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes into his house, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost. I tell you that in the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner repenting than over ninety-nine righteous persons who have no need of repentance. Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one silver coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I lost. In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of God over one sinner repenting (Lk. 15:3-10).

SEEKING THE LOST

Born Lost

Men are created by God and naturally belong to God. Man is also fed by God and cared for by Him, like sheep under the care of a shepherd. God is man's shepherd; therefore, God is man's master.

Men are born lost. To be lost is to be separated from the original owner. If you do not know to whom you belong, that is a proof itself that you are lost. It seems that man knows everything, yet he does not know where he came from, where he is going, or to whom he belongs. Who is your master? Everything has an owner. Do you know to whom you belong?

Man is lost because of sin. Man is born in sins, grows up in sins, and lives in sins; therefore, man is lost. Man is lost because he has lost God. Now because man has lost God, man himself is lost.

The Seeking Shepherd

Man does not know that he is lost; neither does he have any desire to seek God. But God comes to seek man. The way God seeks man is by coming Himself as man's Savior. This is the One incarnated in the flesh, Jesus of Nazareth. So Jesus is not only man's Savior, but also man's shepherd. God seeks man through the Lord Jesus. On the cross the Lord Jesus found man and recovered man. Through death and resurrection the Lord Jesus imparts life to man. This is to recover man, because through the resurrection life man is brought back to God.

What is the wilderness into which the Son as the Shepherd came seeking the lost sheep? The wilderness signifies the world. In the sight of God the world is a wilderness, a wild, desolate place where it is easy to get lost. The shepherd going into the wilderness to seek the lost sheep indicates that the Son has come to the world to be with men (John 1:14). Here we see the Savior's saving strength and His saving love.

In John 10:11 the Lord Jesus says that He is the good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." The work of the Shepherd is to die for us. If He did not die for us, He would not have a way to seek us out.

The Seeking Spirit

The first parable in Luke 15 speaks about God as the shepherd coming to seek the lost sheep. This second parable speaks about God as the woman seeking the lost coin. The shepherd seeks the lost sheep out in the field, whereas the woman seeks the coin inside the house. The first parable is objective; the second is subjective. The woman seeking the lost coin typifies the Holy Spirit coming into our heart to seek us. Just as the shepherd typifies Christ, so the woman typifies the Holy Spirit. In this first parable the objective seeking is the coming of Christ to this earth. In the second parable the Holy Spirit comes into our heart, which is the subjective seeking.

The lamp signifies the word of God (Psa. 119:105, 130) used by the Spirit to enlighten and expose the sinner's position and condition so that he may repent.

According to verse 8, the woman sweeps the house and seeks carefully until she finds the lost coin. The word "sweep" indicates the searching and cleansing of the inside of a sinner. The Son's finding in verse 4 is outside the sinner, completed at the cross through His redemptive death. The Spirit's seeking here is inside, carried out by His working within the repenting sinner.

As indicated by the parable of the seeking woman, the Spirit's work is to enlighten us inwardly. As this seeking woman, the Spirit enlightens our inner being little by little in a fine careful way. The Spirit enlightens our mind, then our emotion and will, and then our conscience and our entire heart. It is in this way that the Spirit "finds" us.

As the result of the Spirit's finding us through enlightening us, we wake up and come to ourselves and realize how foolish it is to stay where we are. We do not wake ourselves up; on the contrary, we are awakened by the enlightening of the seeking Spirit. This seeking, enlightening, and finding of the Spirit takes place neither in the wilderness nor on the cross; it happens in our heart. This results in repentance, which is a change in our mind that produces a change in the direction of our life.

(Adapted from Gospel Outlines and the Life Study of Luke)