

ESF, Lord's day service message
7/3/2016

The Source of True Joy

Text: Luke 15:1-10

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

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷ I 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.

⁸ "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins^[a] and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Some people think that **the** Christian life is boring and joyless. But this is **a misunderstanding**. When you know Christ and when you follow Christ closely, you cannot **help** but live with joy. Today, Jesus proves why a life in Him can be a joyful life. He proves that the life in Him constantly provides the source of true joy. The source of true joy is finding lost souls.

Have you ever lost anything precious? What do you usually do when you lose something precious? Are you going to sit and do nothing? No! You may do everything you can to find it. And if you find it, you will rejoice. The more valuable your lost **item** is the more joyful you will be when you find it.

If you **come to realize** today **how valuable** a lost soul is, and how you can **save** a lost soul, you **will** constantly live with great joy. This is what Jesus is teaching here in this text.

Joy comes from compassion for the lost

First, the source of true joy **comes from** being compassionate toward other people. Because when you are companionate to others, they want to come close to you and gather around you. People are the best source of joy. This is how you can find **true** joy. If you are cold and indifferent to other people, and do not know how to be companionate to **them**, you will be detached from **them**. And you **will not** have people around you who **are a** source of joy.

But those who are compassionate to others, especially to those who are in **need**, have attractive power which can pull other people to them. They **most likely will draw many** people who **are a** source of joy in their lives.

Then how can we have compassionate hearts to others? **By His own example** Jesus teaches us how to be compassionate.

Jesus had the "tax collectors and sinners" gathering around Him. It was an unusual scene. In those days, religious people regraded **tax collectors and sinners** as hopeless people and did not associate with them. So those sinners kept **a distance** from the religious people. They never tried to come close to the religious people.

Jesus was a sinless person, but these sinners were not running away from Jesus but rather running to Him. They did not avoid Him. They were not afraid of Him. Verse 1 says that they were "gathering around to hear him." Why were the sinners coming to Him and eager to listen to Him? It wasn't because Jesus had an easy message that tickled their ears. It wasn't because Jesus compromised on their sins to gain **their** popularity. It wasn't because He said that everything they were doing was

acceptable. It wasn't because He was putting on some sensationalistic show of signs and wonders.

Then, why did those sinners seek out Jesus and come close to Him? Because, Jesus loved them with compassion instead of condemning them. The Bible says in verse 2 that Jesus "welcomes sinners and eats with them." One of the definitions for the Greek word translated as "welcomes" in this verse is to "receive as a friend." This was Jesus attitude toward those who were sinful. Jesus welcomed them. He was compassionate to them and accepting them despite their sins and faults. He was a friend and not a foe.

Jesus had an attitude that the lost people were attracted to, do we? For us as individuals and as a church to reach out to people we need that same compassion. Let's imagine that we happen to be **at** a serious car accident. At the scene of the accident there may be three groups of people, each with a different attitude toward those involved in the accident. The first group is the bystanders and onlookers. They are curious and watch to see what happens but have little involvement. The second group is the police officers who must investigate the cause of the accident, assign blame, and give out appropriate warnings and punishments. The third group is the paramedics. They could care less whose fault the accident was and they did not engage in lecturing about bad driving habits. Their response was to help those who were hurt. They bandaged wounds, freed trapped people, and gave words of encouragement. Three groups - one is uninvolved, one is assigning blame and assessing punishment, and one is helping the **hurt**. When it comes to reaching out to the lost and hurting, we're going to be in one of these three groups. Which group are we in? We may be uninvolved and let others do the work. Or we may condemn people for their foolish behavior saying things like, "**This mess is** your fault. If you had been going to church and doing like you should this never would have

happened!" Or we will be concentrating on helping those who are lost and hurting.

It is easy for us to respond to the sinners like the police **officers** instead of the paramedics. This is what the Pharisees and teachers of the law did. They were more interested in finding out what is right and what is wrong according to their **own** measurement. Their hearts **were concerned with** condemning and criticizing sinners **rather** than **with** showing compassion.

The same attitude may be seen in us today. We're rightfully upset about the current state of moral values, abortion, the homosexual agenda, and the immoral entertainment in society today, among other things. It is fine and appropriate to be concerned about these issues, but we must be careful that our concern about these issues does not turn into condemnation **of** the lost. The lost have never flocked to hear those who were condemning and they never will listen to us if we have that attitude.

But when we are compassionate toward them, they are willing to come to us and listen to us. While they are close to us, we can share God's forgiveness and love in Christ for them. And God will pour His joy **into** our hearts.

Joy comes from a passionate effort

When we see people who joyfully live their lives, we find that they are very passionate for what they do. Those who do not have passion for anything, can hardly live joyful lives. People who have passion are usually very active. Sooner or later their passionate efforts will accomplish something. And it will bring them great joy.

But even before they accomplish something, they can live joyful lives while they are pursuing something passionately.

Jesus was passionate for pursuing the noblest **of all goals**. It **was** finding the lost. It **was** to reach out to the people who are living in darkness without knowing God and to bring them to God's blessed kingdom, to make them blessed people in God's grace.

Why is bringing people to God the noblest **of all pursuits**? Because only it lasts forever. Everything in this world will pass away. Fame, money, power will pass away. Your physical strength, attraction will pass away. Your earthy life will pass away sooner or later. If you pour your passion in anything on earth, the source of your joy will pass away when it **passes** away.

But there is one thing that will never pass away. It is **the** eternal connection to God in Christ. The sure hope in the eternal connection will never pass away. If you are passionate for pursuing that connection, your source of joy will never dry out. If you are passionate for leading people to that connection, your source of joy will last no matter what happens to you and to everything in this world.

So here Jesus encourages us to be passionate for reaching out to the lost souls. Jesus emphasizes the passionate effort that went into finding the lost. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus said that the shepherd would "leave the ninety-nine sheep in the open country and go after the lost sheep. . ." In the parable of the lost coin, the woman lights a lamp, sweeps the whole house, and searches carefully for the lost coin according to verse 8. In both cases the **object of their search** had to be sought after with great passion.

The shepherd did not wait for the lost sheep to come home and the woman did not wait for the lost coin to turn up. Sometimes it seems that

we do **just that**. We tend to wait for the lost to come to us. We're passive rather than active. We're waiting for people to come to Christ instead of putting **our** passionate effort into bringing them to Christ!

That is why we have to remind ourselves of this passion, the passion for the lost souls. Recently in our Wednesday shepherds meeting, a sister told us about her effort to reaching out to a woman. For several months she tried to reach out to the woman. But the woman did not have any interest in listening to her. However, she kept praying for the woman. Finally, several days ago the woman wanted to talk to her about her faith and asked her to pray for her and her son. While the sister shared the story, she shed tears. Her tears were tears of passion for **this** one lost soul. And all of us were touched by the sister's passion for a lost soul.

Finding the lost passionately is not **just** some people's job, but every believer's job. Jesus wants us to live a joyful life. Jesus gives us joy while we passionately reach out to those who do not know God's forgiveness and love.

Joy comes from **searching persistently**

To **seek** out lost souls, we need persistency. Joy comes when we search **for** the lost persistently. If we give up **the search for the lost**, we will **also** lose **the joy of** finding the lost.

To be persistent, we have to recognize the importance of **saving** one lost soul. **Saving one** soul may be more important than just spending time with **people** who have **already** been found and **are standing firm**.

Jesus is **very** much concerned about **just** one lost soul. Look at verse 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?* Also in verse 8: *Or suppose a woman has ten silver*

coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

Lost sheep among spacious fields and hills, and a lost coin in the dirt floor of a home would not have been easily or quickly found. But the shepherd kept searching for the lost sheep until he found **it**. The woman kept searching for the lost coin until she found it.

In both of **these** cases, Jesus emphasizes that we need persistence to find the lost souls. Usually it takes **a long** time to reach out to one person who is lost from God's presence. Sometimes it takes years and years of persistence, but we should not be discouraged or give up. If a sheep or coin was valuable enough to persistently search for, then **how much more valuable** a person who is spiritually lost?

Some years ago, following an exhilarating performance at New York's Carnegie Hall, celebrated classical cellist Yo-Yo Ma went home, slept, and awoke the next day exhausted and rushed. He called for a cab to take him to a hotel on the other side of Manhattan and placed his cello—hand-crafted in Vienna in 1733 and valued at \$2.5 million—in the trunk of the taxi. When he reached his destination, he paid the driver, but forgot to take his cello. After the cab had disappeared, Ma realized what he had done. He began a desperate search for the missing instrument. Fortunately, he had the receipt with the cabby's ID number. After searching all day the taxi was located in a garage in Queens with the priceless cello still in the trunk. Ma's smile could not be contained as he spoke to reporters.

Here's the point, Yo Yo Ma did not quit but persisted because what was lost was too valuable to give up on. The spiritually lost are too valuable for us to quit trying to reach out to even though our efforts do not pay off quickly. If we do not give up and keep being persistent, the time will surely come when we will be able to find the lost. And the Lord will fill our hearts with joy.