



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

There once was a little six-year-old boy who struggled to listen to a rather lengthy sermon. After the service, the little boy asked his mother a question that sooner or later most “church kids” ask. He said, “Mom what does the preacher do the rest of the week?” The mother replied, “Son, he is a very busy man. He takes care of church business, visits the sick, studies the Bible and he has to take time to rest up. You see preaching in public is not an easy job.” This little boy thought about that and said, “Well, listening ain’t so easy either.”

Truth is that listening is not always easy, especially when the messages are challenging. Last week’s message from the end of Chapter 14 was challenging. We heard that in order to follow Jesus, it takes commitment, full, 100% commitment. We talked about how costly grace was for Jesus. He gave up his life for us, so it seems fitting that if we are to be his disciples, we need to give it our all as well. Our family, our money, our life has to take second place to our devotion to Jesus. The last verse in Chapter 14 says, “Are you listening to this? Really listening?” Jesus wants to make sure that we know the true cost of discipleship.

This week our lesson is one that can be just as difficult to hear. We as Christians, followers of Christ, his disciples, are responsible to reach out to the lost. As I thought about this all week, it dawned on me that for most faithful followers, this thought of following Jesus by reaching out to the lost is quite difficult. Our little church here in Park Falls, and I include myself in this, is

not always able to respond in the same way that Jesus did. But remember that even though this message is a challenge, it is the message of the Bible and this section of Luke's tough Gospel. We should not feel condemned if we are not good at seeking out the lost, but we should let this command of Jesus change us, change our hearts. That process of change can be uncomfortable. We all have lived long enough to know that!

These two parables this morning have something of value to teach us about being lost. In the stories the lost thing, whether a sheep or a coin, have value. In those days, whether it was 1 out of 100 or 1 out of 10 of a lost thing, it would not be ignored. As our parable says, they would rather put every effort into finding it and would be glad when they did. And it would be a good cause for a celebration. If we were to continue reading after our lesson today, we would hear the Prodigal Son parable. There we would find a father who lost one of his two sons. So, 1 out of 2. And boy was that a huge celebration when the lost son returns.

And since we all have experienced this phenomenon of loss, we can kind of relate to what Jesus is saying here. So, why is it so hard when we apply the same principle to people who are spiritually lost? The term "lost" refers to those who are not Christians, to those who are outside the household of God and those who are following Jesus to be part of his family. They want this connection too. They want to be "found" if you will. To me it seems that those that are spiritually lost, who are represented by the lost things in these stories, certainly do need to be found. Jesus is telling the crowd that He will find the lost. And since we are his disciples, we too should help others that are lost and need to find Jesus. We should exhibit the same efforts and perseverance in searching for those who need our help. And then we too can be filled with joy when they are found.

I think that this Gospel reading is reminding Christians of how they should respond to the lost and how it is our responsibility to always be spreading the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ as it shows how the lost, the not yet found, are seeking the love that God has for all people. It is true, God never stops reaching out to us and coming to us over and over again.

And it is that thought that I would like to talk just a little bit more about this morning. Think with me for a minute how you felt when you were a child, had a bad experience or you felt lost, and your father took you in his arms. You could rest securely, feel safe and were protected. You felt loved and cared for. Did you ever have a time like that? Or how about when you scrapped your knee, when you fell roller skating and your mother comforted you with a hug that was as effective as that Band-Aid she put on your knee.

They called me daddy's little girl when I was little or at least younger. Actually, I was his little girl for the rest of his life. So, I certainly know and have felt that my dad was always there for me and would go to any length to protect me, no matter what happened. And that is really a nice feeling.

Our heavenly Father is no different. He walks with us each moment of the day. He is always there to comfort us. And most of all He wants us back in the fold. He wants us to be His

disciples. And He will do everything needed to bring us back to Him. Only the sin of the world and the devil can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. And when we get caught up in that, we need to hear the forgiving voice of Jesus, calling out to us to come back to him. It is then up to us to repent.

Remember the last line of the text, “Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Man, that is an awesome thought. The angels in heaven sing and dance in joy when we return to God in repentance over our wrongdoing.

I believe that our church does not talk much about repentance. Some tend to think of it as an afterthought. How many times do you use the words “thank you” in your prayers to the Lord? If you are like me you tend to use words of thanks way more than you speak the word, “sorry!” We are happy to be safe and loved by the Lord, but don’t wait in line to be judged.

Not only can we find ourselves lost to sin, but we can also feel lost when things that are beyond our control happen to us. The human condition is filled with loss. Things like lost hopes, lost years, lost purpose, lost love, lost ideals, and lost opportunities are painful. But we are always reclaimed by Jesus. And so, we need to look beyond our losses and keep our eyes on Jesus only. Be a true disciple and look only to Him. He knows what it is like.

He is no stranger to loss. Jesus lost his life on a cross, humiliated until the end by Roman soldiers. So, he gets it, folks. As Jesus lost his life, his disciples fled in fear of their own lives. He was lost and deserted by his friends at the cross. Jesus also lost his reputation as a teacher, a friend. He lost that honor when he died a criminal’s death. As Jesus breathed his last as a human, he even felt that his father in heaven deserted him. “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” Jesus knows your loss and feels it. He lost everything when He came to earth as a human, and then His Father called Him home to Him in heaven. Just as He calls out to us to come back to His flock.

God will continue to be concerned about the spiritually lost of our day, just as he is concerned about us when we go missing. All people matter to God, so much in fact that when the lost are found, even one of them, there is rejoicing in heaven. There is more joy over one sinner coming to Jesus than over the 99 people that are with God. And if lost people matter so much to God, they ought to matter to us too!

We need to be a people who reach out to the lost of our world with compassion. Yes, it will take effort. Most likely it will even take persistence on our part, but we are called to share the love of Jesus Christ with everyone. Heaven will rejoice when that happens.

I read this poem this week and would like to share it with you. Larry Bryant is a song writer, singer, and an ordained minister who loves to bring glory to God. He wrote:

At the completion of the golden gate,
No, the angels did not celebrate.
And when the Wright boys flew their bird,
No angelic shouts were heard.

There is only one thing that we are sure about,
That can make those angel jump & shout.
It's when a sinner makes the Lord his choice,
That's when the angels rejoice.

When the light bulb first lit up the town,
No, the angels did not dance around.
And when the Model "T" first hit the street,
It didn't bring all heaven to its feet.

When the first man stepped on the moon,
They didn't sing a victory tune.
And when the first computer was born,
They didn't blow old Gabriel's horn.

There is only one thing that we're sure about,
That can make those angels jump & shout.

It's when a sinner heeds the Savior's voice,
That's when the angels all rejoice.

We have a God who is an awesome God. He gave his only son for us so that we might have eternal life. That sort of love is not measurable. So, my hope for you is that you share this love that God has for you. Let everyone listen as we make heaven sing.

AMEN