

Lost and Found

Week 10

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Day 1

Stories

Jesus knew that going to Jerusalem would mean his death but he also knew that death was why he came. After only 9 chapters, Jesus begins his march to destiny in Jerusalem. Along the way Jesus tells stories so that the people around him can understand what he’s about to accomplish.

It was common in his day for people to tell stories called parables. They would tell parables that affirm their culture and lifestyle. It was a way of passing on values to their children. Stories often used characters that were particularly good, noble or virtuous.

In contrast Jesus told stories that centered around common every day themes: farmers, fishermen, shepherds. They were stories that working people could relate to. Jesus told parables that challenged his culture’s values and lifestyle.

There are three stories in a row that all center on lost things being found. Each story is meant to tell us about what God is like and what he values. The first parable tells us how God is like a shepherd who looks for a lost sheep. He ignores the rest of the flock leaving them. to search high and low for the lost sheep to bring it back together. God made us to be social creatures and live in healthy communities. God’s priority is to rescue the one in danger instead of maintaining the flock.

The next story Jesus tells how God is like a woman who has lost a coin. In her economy the coin is a tenth of her life savings. She searched all over her house until she finds it and when she does find it she throws a party with her friends, celebrating her reunion with the coin. This shows how God values us, and He is overjoyed when we are reunited with him.

The third story is of a Prodigal father and 2 lost sons. The younger son was selfish, hedonistic and unwise in the way he spent money and dishonored his father in a culture where honor is everything. He became the cultural equivalent of a male escort. The son comes back to his father begging for a job as a domestic servant.

The father doesn't listen to his son's request for a servant's position. You can't negotiate with God as you enter his Kingdom. The father insists on restoring the position of his son. He throws a party celebrating the reunion with his son!

But the older son is also lost. The younger son was separated from his father because of foolish selfishness; the other son is still separated from his father out of a sense of righteousness.

The father's priority was reuniting with his younger son. The older son should have joined him in this pursuit. Instead He is busy in the field keeping up the family business. The older son is indignant at the celebration for his brother. What madness would possess his father to reward such foolishness? The older brother is lost because he only knows right and wrong but doesn't understand community and family. Even though the older brother is lost, the father invites his older son to join him

Through this story Jesus tells us how God is like a father who is looking for us and invites us to come celebrate with Him.

Reading Today: Luke 10-11

10-15 minutes

Day 2

Prayers of Jesus

From the beginning to the end of his life Jesus deep in prayer. His mother Mary first found out she was pregnant and God had a special plan for her song. Her heart sang out a song of hope and joy thanking God for this blessing. She wasn't concerned by the disastrous social danger of being an unmarried teenage mother in a very conservative culture. She simply trusted that God's plan was greater than the struggle. She thanked God in prayer for her baby boy. I can't recommend this enough for expecting mothers to pray for their children.

Jesus prayed to God like he was talking to his Dad. He spoke naturally from his heart. He didn't follow the pattern of religious lofty speech he spoke to God honestly and openly. In the Garden before he was assassinated he spoke to God about the struggle of facing the cross. God didn't take away the obstacle but God gave him the strength to go through it and come out victorious. Aligned with God's perspective Jesus was able to see past his own pain on the cross and asked God to forgive the people who killed him. There was no pretense about looking good, just an honest love from God in extraordinary circumstances. That kind of love develops over time spent communicating honestly, openly and naturally with God.

Don't be discouraged if God says no when you ask for something. We are like children to God. Kids ask for many things that just aren't healthy for them. Any good parent will use wisdom and restraint responding to children with a loving no.

If God says no, it's wise to accept it. His wisdom is deep beyond measure. It's ok to ask why? as you accept his refusal, you'd be surprised by the wisdom God wants to share with you. He really wants to train us to grow in wisdom and strength.

Prayer is also a good time to listen to God. God can communicate with us in many different ways. God has communicated with people through prophets, donkeys, rainbows, accumulation of dew on cloth, and on rare occasions an audible voice. One of the most reliable forms today is the Bible. It isn't a direct message from God to you personally, but you do get to eavesdrop on the conversations God has had with people in the past. It's a good way to get to know his character and recognize Him today.

There are obstacles when it comes to hearing from God. We can be too distracted, too self-absorbed, too busy. All the things that make it difficult to communicate with people around you, can affect communication with God.

Prayer empowers in a strange way. We can come to God frustrated, confused, exhausted. God gives us focus, refreshment and strength. We come to Him with joy and He shares in our delight. When we stop and listen to Him, He can give us vision and insight. We surrender to Him and He sets us free. Prayer is where we meet with God.

Reading Today: Luke 12-13

10-15 minutes

Day 3

Trading Places

The Roman Road

One of Jesus' followers wrote a letter to his friends in Rome. In his letter he explains in big picture description what God has done for them through Jesus. Following his outline you can use this "**Roman Road**" as a way to describe your faith.

Everyone is separated from God.

"No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one." ... For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Romans 3:10-12, and 23

The separation from God leads to death.

For the wages of sin is death...

Romans 6:23

Jesus Christ took the death that was meant for us.

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:8

Trusting Jesus saves us from the death.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved ... For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9-10, and 13

Trusting Jesus puts us back together with God in a right way.

Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us.

Romans 5:1

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

Trusting Jesus, We also inherit eternal life.

...the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

In summary:

We have all walked away from God in one way or another. We choose to make a life for ourselves instead of following his plan. That separation from God is sin. God is the source of life, separating from him brings death and destruction to ourselves and those around us. Jesus accepted a death that we deserved so that we could have the eternal life that he deserved. It is a free exchange. All we have to do is believe that He accomplished what we couldn't do. Jesus put us back in favor with God.

Reading Today: Luke 14-15

10-15 minutes

Day 4

Influence**Serving my Neighbors**

Jesus was a King yet he came to serve. His idea of leadership is humbly serving others, not being waited on and pampered by our power. Following in his footsteps we will be serving our neighbors this week. This may require creativity. Here's a few suggestions:

- Give a gift such as baked goods.
- Try the obvious; "what can I do to serve you?"
- Ask, "What are you doing this weekend?"
- Or "What do you need?"
- Let them know you're eager to help them

Look for ways to serve but leave the choice in their hands. As always use your best judgment.

Reading Today: Luke 16-17

10-15 minutes

Day 5

My Purpose

Over the next three weeks you will use the results of all those surveys to develop your personal life mission and purpose statement. Many businesses use a mission statement to focus on activities that they can do with excellence. What do I do that is almost effortless from my perspective but seems daunting to others? Imagine the disaster Mac Donald's restaurants would face getting involved in the retail copy paper business because they don't have a statement identifying their mission and purpose is to serve affordable food. The same thing can happen to us when we don't know our purpose.

Read through the guide: "Putting it Together" in the Appendix.

Next week we will follow the guide and begin crafting our life purpose statements.

"to a hammer all problems look like an nail"

Reading Today: Luke 18

10-15 minutes