

What's It Like To Being Lost? Luke 15:11-24

Intro: There is one thing Christians and non-Christians agree on – they both dislike evangelism. The word alone conjures up images of “in your face” confrontation. Therefore Christians usually avoid gospel showdowns and most of the non-Christians are relieved they do.

You see, Christians are afraid to evangelize the lost because they don't know what it means to be lost. The lost have no clue that they need to be evangelized so both remain fat and happy in their ignorance.

The truth is, however, Jesus spent most of His time evangelizing and teaching on evangelism. Today we are going to look at a very familiar passage of scripture. A passage of Scripture where Jesus teaches on being Lost.

[Read Lk 15:11-24/Pray/Dismiss Jr Church]

When evangelism is attempted it rarely begins with “in your shoes” empathy. If Christians really understood the spiritually lost people around us we would talk about our faith more naturally. Evangelism would be more of a conversation and less of a high-pressure sales pitch.

Unfortunately we Christians don't understand the lost so we avoid the topic of our faith when around them. We don't know what they think or how they feel, so we don't know how to help them. We know what they need – a personal relationship with Jesus – but we cannot get the conversation started. So we often say nothing.

But there is a simple way we Christians can understand and help spiritually lost people. Its called learn from the time we got lost.

Jesus, in describing His mission no earth said, “**...the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**” (Lk 19:10). Being lost means we have a destination – to be reconciled to God. But we are lost on our journey until we get saved.

Many of us have been saved so long that we can remember what it was like before we were saved or maybe we were saved so young that we can't remember not being saved. So as we look at the lost today I want you to remember a time in your life when you got lost. Maybe it was while on vacation or maybe you were on a business trip. All of us have been lost at some point and if we think back to the time we can learn something about the spiritually lost.

I. **Being Lost Can Be Fun**

- A. Do you agree with any of these statements?
 - 1. The lost are miserable
 - 2. Felt-needs plague them
 - 3. They struggle to build relationships
 - 4. Nothing they do fills their empty lives with meaning
 - 5. Aware of their sin, they run from God
 - 6. They fear death and worry about eternity
- B. What we believe about the lost determines how we attempt to share the gospel with them
 - 1. If you agreed with any or all of my statements you are like I used to be – unaware of the truth about the lost
 - 2. Because of my lack of understanding of the lost my attempts to evangelism was more ineffective than not.
- C. Look at our text.

1. Once he got his inheritance it says that “...**not many days after [getting his inheritance he] journeyed to a far county and wasted his substance with riotous living**”
 2. His life was all about him –
 - a) It was his inheritance
 - b) He wasted it on his own selfish lusts (riotous living)
 - c) V 30 tells us what the **riotous living** is:
 - (1) Harlots
 - (2) He lived on the wild side
 - (3) Spending all his money
 - (4) Not saving a penny
- D. Consider this truth about the Lost...
1. “**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death**” (Pr 14:12)
 2. We often think that are lost friends and family members are miserable but the truth is they actually believe what they are doing is fun
 3. The modern man no longer believes in God – not the God of Scripture any way
- E. Consider the truth, it can be fun being lost, at least for a while
1. Author, John Kramp, in his book *Out of their faces and into their shoes* recalls a story about the time he and a group of his friend took off to visit Blue Lake outside of Portland, Oregon.

While driving along the beautiful fir-tree lined roads they spotted a little green sign that said *Little Crater Lake*. Now everyone knew of Crater Lake in southern Oregon. It rests in the stump of a once towering

volcano. The brilliant blue of the water stuns first time visitors. The lake is encircled by multicolored lava walls – some reaching 2000 feet high.

The small group agreed to take a detour to find this baby of Crater Lake. Off they went following an 8 mile dirt road up through the mountains of Oregon. When they arrived at their destination there wasn't a lake in sight. A small sign marked a walkway as the way to *Little Crater Lake*. So they loaded up the children, chairs, and picnic equipment and began the walk, preparing for a not-to-be-forgotten view.

What they saw when they finally arrived, however, was a 20 foot, irregular circle of slimy, greenish-yellow water. Formed by a volcanic hiccup which exploded a narrow shaft of earth that later filled with water, the putrid pool sat stagnant and smelly. A sign, tilting and weather worn, warned “No swimming.”

The group stood, stared at each other then began to laugh. For them, *Little Crater Lake* instantly became a treasured memory, a testimony that being lost can be fun.

2. The same is true with the Spiritually lost as well, they would rather “...**enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season**” (Heb 11:25) than to turn to the Lord
- F. The reason being lost can be fun is this – sin is always shortsighted.
1. It focuses on to day – forgetting about tomorrow
 2. This is why Solomon said, “**It is as sport to a fool to do mischief...**” (Pr. 10:23)
- G. **Being Lost Can Be Fun**

II. **No One Gets Lost On Purpose**

A. 1 Timothy 6:10 says that some people have **“...have erred [strayed] from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”**

1. In the first parable the Lord told of a lost sheep – sheep don't get lost on purpose, they just stray away from the flock
2. **ILL:** A mom stand in an aisle at Wal-mart. She feels it before she knows it: her little boy is missing.

Frantic she begins to search all over for him. After what seems to her like an hour – actually only a few minutes – she finds him. There he is looking at the Wii, waiting his turn to play the demo.

Right away the mom takes hold of him and says “Don't you ever get lost like that again.” At that point the little boy looks at his mom and says, “But mom, I didn't get lost on purpose.”

He is right; he didn't. But he was lost just the same.

- B. Did you ever get lost on purpose? NO, I am sure you didn't
1. I would guess many of us have gotten lost; some on more occasions than we would like to admit
 2. Every time we get lost we have a reason for getting lost
 3. But those reasons never include “I did it on purpose”
- C. This is one truth about the Lost we need to understand
1. The son in our text for today he didn't set out to be lost – being lost was just in his nature
 2. The sheep in the earlier parable didn't set out to get lost it was in his nature.

3. Jesus understood this when He interacted with spiritually lost people
 - a) Jesus knew the people He encountered were sinners by nature – David said **“I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me”** (Ps 51:5)
 - b) Jesus knew the people he encountered were sinners by choice: **“...this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”** (Jn 3:19)
 4. In spite of their spiritual condition, Jesus did not write off people as lost on purpose.
 - a) He understood the consequences people endured as a result of their sin – consequences deserved but never desired
 - b) He dealt with sinners as if being lost was only a current location, not an unchangeable destination
 5. Jesus understood that **“... by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”** (Rom 5:12)
 - a) He also understood that because **“all have sinned”** that the **“wages of sin is death”**
 - b) But He also understood that just because **“all have sinned”** and that the price for that sin is death; eternal separation from God that all is not hopeless because **“...the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Rom 6:23)
- D. So, just because our lost friends and family members seem to be having fun being lost doesn't mean they actually chose to be lost or that they are aware of the consequences of their being lost.

III. **You Cannot Force People To Admit They Are Lost**

- A. Steven, after delivering his sermon to the High Priest and the council, he said **“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”**(Act 7:51)
- B. I asked Sally last night if she could remember a time when we were lost – she couldn’t
1. We have literally driven all over this country and Europe and she could remember a time when we were lost
 2. However, I can remember many times when she would say to me are you sure you know where we are?
 3. Maybe you should stop and ask someone.
 4. I will tell you I would never admit that I was lost even if I thought I was.
 5. Last summer Sally and I went up to Eric’s for our granddaughter’s Jr. Hi graduation party. We were to pick our Son up at his work and he would ride to his house with us.

Since I couldn’t remember how to get there I plugged his work address into the Garmin. Well, for some reason Garmin took us right down town Chicago rather than on the toll way south of the city. In doing that I ended up getting off the highway and we ended up in China Town. I was actually lost.

But I refused to admit that I was lost I kept telling Sally that I would keep following the Garmin. She, after getting very upset with me, finally called Eric and he

- directed us out of the city right to the parking lot of his job.
6. I refused to admit I was lost no matter how hard Sally tried to convince me – in fact the harder she tried the more I was determined not to admit it.
- C. I didn’t like being told I was lost –
1. It embarrassed me
 2. It mad me angry
 3. In some ways it made me feel less a man
- D. Here is the truth about the spiritually lost – When it comes to confronting people about being spiritually lost you cannot force them to admit it.
1. When Jesus confronted the Pharisees about their lost condition He...
 - a) Told stories
 - b) He met with them individually
 - c) Finally, when their opposition to His ministry reached a dangerous pitch, only then did He bring out the big guns
 - d) Here is a summery of Matt 23 when He confronted them for the last time:
 - (1) You are like a bunch of tombs filled with dead bones
 - (2) You are like fancy cups, clean and shiny on the outside but dirty on the inside
 - (3) You think you are so spiritual that you travel all over seeking people to be proselytes – but when you convert people, you make them twice the sons of hell you are
 - (4) You are like eye doctors, working to remove specks from patients’ eyes while you have huge planks in your own
 2. He was pretty direct and the Pharisees went ballistic

3. The hard truth about the Lost is that until the sense the reality of their being lost no amount of pushing can create a desire to be saved.
 - a) The lost will just refuse to admit they are lost
 - b) That is where the church comes in
 - c) You invite your lost friend to church; they begin to attend regularly, they begin to ask you questions that stem from the things preached, read, taught and discussed during the service
 - d) That is why you are to, ***“be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear”*** (1 Peter 3:15)
- E. The son had to get down in the hog pin before he would admit he was lost; then and only then did he see that he needed a savior

Conclusion: You know, it is easy to get lost...we are all born that way. That means that most of the lost of this world are lost and don't even know it. That is why Jesus said ***“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”*** (Matt 7:21)

The problem in our world today is the lost have just enough religion to keep them out of heaven and we have just enough world in us to see to it they never know they are lost.

Over a year ago I issued a challenge to make 2,500 contacts, nearly 38 of you came forward and accepted the challenge; to date we have only made 1,052 contacts. I hate to say it but that is actually very selfish of us. We have been commanded by Christ to Go and tell.

There are at least 60 adults in this body, if each of you would simply agree to hand out – not just lay one on a table or in a bathroom but actually give one to some one – if each adult would agree to hand out 42 tracts this year, by December we will have made 2,500 contacts this year. Is that too much to ask from Christians? It is a command that we should obey.

The challenge today is if you will commit with me today to do your part wont you come forward during the invitation and pick up at least 2 tracts from the table.