Sermon Sep-11, 2022 = **LOST and FOUND.**

When you look at today’s news, it seems that God has **LOST** tract of world events, now the world **LOST’s it’s way**, we can’t even keep up with the downward spiral, yet, the Bible says that God doesn't change, He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Q: So, what does God expect from you and me today.

What’s the difference between today’s date and 30 to 40 years ago when the world looked so much better. Let’s read what did Kind David wrote 2 900 yrs ago.

**Psalm 14:1-3 Only fools think there is no God. People like that are evil and do terrible things. They never do what is right. The Lord looks down from heaven to see if there is anyone who is wise, anyone who looks to Him for help. But everyone has gone the wrong way. Everyone has turned bad. No one does anything good. No, not one person.** *( a Lost nation)* **(>> Pic-fool)**

In Psalm 14 David wrote about the fools and the wise.

He describes the struggle and the suffering when people try to make their own decisions, and not relying on walking with Jesus. …… *I think it’s still the same these days*.

**Jeremiah 4:22 The Lord says**: **My people are foolish; they do not know Me; They are foolish children and have no under-standing. They are skillful at doing evil, but they do not know how to do good.**

**(>> Pic-sheep)**

 **( It means we need to walk together with Jesus who guides us )**

Jeremiah says the sorrows we bring on ourselves by thinking we can handle this life like lost sheep without seeking a loving relationship with Jesus (nope) **we need** a **relationship with Jesus.**

 Paul wrote: **Rom 5:8 God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (>> Pic-Jesus . . . Paul also wrote to Timothy)**

**1 Tim. 1:12-17** **I thank Christ Jesus our Lord because He trusted me and gave me this work of serving Him. He gives me strength. In the past I insulted Christ. As a proud and violent man, I persecuted God’s people. But God gave me mercy because I did not know what I was doing. (Paul was lost) >>**

**I did that before I became a believer. But our Lord gave me a full measure of His grace. And with that grace came the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a true statement: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and I am the worst of them. >>**

**But I was given mercy so that in me Christ Jesus could show that He has patience without limit. Christ showed His patience with me, the worst of all sinners. He wanted me to be an example for those who would believe in Him and have eternal life. Honor and glory to the King who rules forever. He cannot be destroyed and cannot be seen. Honor and glory forever and ever to the only true God. (>> Pic-Paul persecutes the church)**

Paul reminds us that Jesus came from heaven and died on the cross to cleans and save us, and **God is seeking a relationship with us**, regardless of our previous sinful life.

Jesus told Parables so that the people could grasp the meaning of the Spiritual blessings. **The parallel of the Parable**, (parallel like train-tracks). Jesus tells the Parable of the Lost Sheep and the Parable of the Lost Coin, by showing us that lost-ness is our NORMAL state until we walk parallel next to Him. **(>> Pic- train-track)**

People LOST their walk with Jesus. Today I would like to go over the **returning of our lost relationship with our loving Savior.**

I was born on a big farm North of Pretoria S.A. We had Zulu or Sesotho friends and we had to look after the 100+ sheep in the African bush where there were all kind of dangers in the tall grass and thick thorn bushes.

Sheep are not the smartest animal, because they wonder away from the flock very easily. After a long day in the field, we go back home.

My Dad would be waiting for us to count the sheep one-by-one as they enter the shed in a single line. **(>> Pic-lost sheep)**

I remember the spanks my Dad gave us when ONE of the sheep got lost. We had to go back and search for it in the bush, sometimes at night with lamps until we find the LOST sheep, then we would shout for joy (*kiss the sheep*) and forget the spanking. . . . . .

Many of us have lost an item, and we know that feeling with losing something. It’s terrible. Most of us have experienced the joy of finding that item that was lost— the satisfaction and the joy of having found that lost item.

***Luke 15:1-*3** **Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them**.

**(>> Pic-eat with Tax collector)**

We know that Jesus ate and spent many times with sinners.

Jesus told some EASY parables about being LOST and being FOUND. People understood it clearly.

**Today we can learn from these parables of Jesus.**

**(>> Pic-women washes Jesus feet)**

Luke wrote some of these parables.

Luke 7:36-50 The story of the “sinful woman” who anointed Jesus’ feet with very expensive perfume and wet it with her tears and wiped it with her hair. Lost (*A very humble attitude*)

(Luke didn’t even want to write that ugly word “a prostitute”)

**(>> Pic-Zacchaes)** Luke 19:1-10 Jesus saw the tax collector Zacchaeus sitting in a tree. Jesus called, “*Zacchaeus, hurry! Come down. I must stay at your house today.*” The Pharisees began to complain, “*Look at the kind of man Jesus is staying with. Zacchaeus is a tax collector, and a sinner*.

Jesus knew Zacchaeus was a sinner: *but Jesus said to him: I must stay at your house today*.

Luke wrote about three meals where Jesus was criticized for hanging out with sinners, yet Jesus never comments about the behavior of those sinners. During that cultural time, sharing a meal meant more than just eating together. It meant building a relationship and acceptance by eating with “tax collectors and sinful” women. Jesus shows His complete acceptance of them. ***“non-believers that were LOST***” - and Jesus was searching for them - just like I searched for our lost sheep on the farm.

The Bible says that “*we* all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (*Romans 3:23*)  . . . . but we were found.

*Luke 15:7 Jesus said:***I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over ONE sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. ( >>>> Pic-joy in heaven)**

This is what Jesus meant when He told the Parables. Jesus reaches out for people who are on the edge of doing something wrong, who frequently do things that are not in their best interests or the best interest of others. (***One sinner was found – now there is rejoicing in heaven***) -- Hallelujah.

At the Saskatoon conference we were told that every person you talk to is a potential child of God, they just don’t know it yet.

Let’s see what Jesus is referring to: *parallel with the Parable*.
The **LOST**, the **FOUND** and the **CELEBRATION**. 1)There is this large group of people, but one person of that group became **lost**.

2)Then the main characters (Shepard/women) in these parables **search** relentlessly for the “lost” item until it’s found.

3)The return of that lost one becomes an opportunity for the whole group to **celebrate** and rejoice. . . Hallelujah again.

4)Jesus summarizes the lesson by talking about **repentance**.

Let’s go over what Jesus is telling us today – R. U. ready??

**1)Lost:** The two parables were when Jesus walked on the earth: a shepherd loses a sheep, and a woman loses a coin. (one sheep or 1 coin). Both are equal to a full day’s pay.

Remember the lost sheep and lost coin don’t know that they’re lost, nor do they play a role in being found. The lost sheep and the lost coin do nothing to help the shepherd, or the woman to find them.

The “lost people or the non-believers” around us are so busy doing wrong things, and it’s not good for them. Things like lying, steeling, or addiction, which can negatively affect or destroy relationships with their family and friends.

Our “sins” or our “lostness” keeps us from enjoying the fullness of a loving relationship with Jesus or a loving relationship with people around us. *Being on the wrong train-track will cause us to get lost. (>> Pic* – wrong train track)

**2)Found-**This is the most important aspect of the parables: the main characters are committed to find the lost items and bring it back to the main group. The shepherd and the woman in these two parables are diligently seeking the lost sheep and the lost coin. Jesus’ stresses that, they were found.

The two in charge of each group are persistent in their concern, and in their desire to find & return the lost to the rest of the group. *NOTICE: God’s desire to return is critical*.

Jesus is determined to find the non-believer and to return them to the right relationship with Him. They cannot rely on their own efforts to make them “to be found” or to save them or make them right with God. Forget it, we cannot do it by ourselves, only Jesus can make it happen.

We can rest in God’s gracious character & love for all of us.

**3)Celebration-** This section in both parables seems most out of place. Why would a shepherd have a huge celebration because he found one lost sheep while the other ninety-nine were safe?

Why would the woman, who was so concerned about losing one day’s pay (*one lost coin*) hold a celebration with friends that would cost her more than the lost coin? *It doesn’t make sense*.

Jesus is showing us this big celebration: God demonstrates His great joy in heaven and the welcoming for all people, the believers as well as the non-believers that were lost and now being found and brought back on the right track - Jesus.

We’ve all had coins that got lost (*the same as non-believers around us*), God wants us to find these non-believers and show them in a loving way that they are on the wrong train-track = (*and they will fall off or get lost*).

This is showing us the love of God and delights in everyone. The Grace of God doesn’t add up – it doesn’t make logical or economic sense (a sheep or a coin)) – but it’s the driving force of love that governs all of God’s relations with all the people on the earth.

**4)Repentance-** The lost sheep and the lost coin don’t really “repent.” However, both parables point out that without the restoration of seeking, finding and repentance cannot not take place. The word translated as “repentance” is the Greek word metanoia = (I’m found - *change in our thinking*).

Metanoia really *means* how we should see ourselves, how we should see others, or see the world – as well as a change in how we should respond to others. It means the renewing of our thinking from our regular ways of understanding and in our reaction towards others.

Jesus welcomed those who were considered “non-believers” We also must acknowledge our own need for renewing our own thoughts (metanoia). (*Are we really willing to change our thinking*)?

Very often we allow hurts from past experiences and our way of upbringing to influence our reactions and responses to the world around us. Some of us were NOT appreciated or NOT loved, or NOT understood the way we needed to be, and this has created a particular way of seeing our world.

Letting go of our past hurts, but let God love us and let God love others through us, is part of our metanoia. **Repentance. W**e were LOST before (wrong train track) and now we’re being FOUND by Jesus our Savior. (You & me) The LOST sheep trusted Jesus as our Sheppard – we had to repent.

Let’s summarize:

**Recognize that God doesn’t require anyone to change before a person can be found.**By being FOUND and letting ourselves to be loved by Jesus creates a change in our view in the way we respond to God, and to others, and to the world. (That’s *Metanoia*)

**Realize that God seeks after everyone until we are found. Then the 100% restoration & connection, and 100% acceptance of Jesus are part of God’s vision and intention for all humanity.**

**We also participate in God’s heavenly celebration when we show 100% love and acceptance to those who might be non-believers around us, just like the prostitute (a LOST sole) who cried at Jesus’ feet with tears.**

Let us follow Jesus’ example by eating with those that are “unworthy”, and show full acceptance of love, that’s when we play a part in the returning of the “lost sheep” back to the Sheppard.

Jesus is showing us how God is reaching out to others – many times. He is doing it through you and me when we help and serve others. (*the parallel of the Parable- the lost sheep*)

Many times, we focus on peoples’ wrong behavior and their wrong attitudes rather than God’s purpose which is to find those around us who are lost.

With these “parallel Parables” of Jesus, we can understand a little bit more about how God feels for those who find themselves in wrong behaviors (the *wrong track*) those who are being misled and being deceived by Satan and on their way to Hell.

We can think of our own wrong habits that might be destructive in our relationships, and we can think about our own need for metanoia (or change of thinking) andcelebrate that God has invited us to be part in other people’s lives - ***metanoia.*** (change of thinking)

We do know the joy of finding something of value that was LOST, and we can rejoice with God in heaven when people come to the Sheppard. God is seeking a close relationship with each one of us. (pic >> Lion & Lamb)

Paul was a “non-believer”, he was **LOST**, but he was **FOUND** and **CELEBRATED**, and he **REPENTED**. (pic >> lost, Found, Celebrate)

**Paul says: Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners. I was given mercy so that in me Christ Jesus could show that He has patience without limit. *This is what God expects from you & me every day, just like Paul.***

**God wanted me to be an example for those who would believe in Him** *(that’s you & me)* **and have eternal life.**

We also were once LOST and now being FOUND by Jesus our Shepard. Let us rejoice and praise HIM.

**Rev. 3:14** **“To the angel of the church: “This is the message from the Amen, (Jesus) the Faithful and true Witness, who is the Origin of all that God has created"**Amen, Amen, and Amen

Hallelujah - - - Amen.