

Text: Luke 15.1-8
St Stephen's

Feb 5/6, 2006
Sat PM/Sun AM

Lost People Matter!

Do you know that one of Jesus' most important ministries was busting up people's worldviews? Everyone has a worldview. Your worldview is your own personal set of answers to life's biggest Q's –

- Who am I?
- What kind of world do I live in?
- What is my purpose for life?
- What makes life worth living?

Everyone has answers to those questions. Your answers are the framework through which you see the world, the **grid of reality** through which you experience the world...

If your worldview **corresponds to the way things really are**, you can see clearly. If your worldview has a **tilt**, your sight is distorted. If your worldview is filled with **lies**, you can't see at all.

But **God designed life to correct our worldviews**. If you are bumping off life hard – you know if everyone around you **hates you** and you just got **fired** from your third job in a month and your **dog growls** at you every time you come home... You might want to reassess your worldview!

One of the problems Jesus faced in his teaching ministry was that the **prevailing worldviews** people had embraced were **hostile** to the Kingdom of God.

So Jesus does things to **explode people's worldviews**. Like tell strange stories. Like break the rules on the Sabbath. Like say abrasive things. Like fight with people (some of you are saying, 'Hey, I knew I was a lot like Jesus...')

You know why Jesus fought with the Pharisees and the Scribes and the Teachers of the Law so much? Because they were the **guardians** of a worldview that stood against the Kingdom.

The Pharisee's Worldview...

- God has put us in charge. (so we get to set/enforce the rules)
- Good people keep the rules and bad people break them.
- Good people are loved by God and bad people aren't.
- The problem with the world is the bad people. (stay away from them)

This worldview is something close to our hearts. You know it pretty well. It is the dominant worldview of **every parent**. We say these things to our kids all the time!

This is '**self-salvation**', and it is a real problem, because you **can't be good enough**. "I need to be good then God will accept me." Martin Luther's great insight into human nature was that this is **the default mode of the human heart**. Your heart continues to work like this even after your conversion.

The Pharisees and they just took this and **hammered people with it**. People resented them for it and no one who ever failed or messed up would come to a Pharisee for help or hope.

But Jesus said things so differently and did things so differently that people flocked to him... Take out your Bible... Turn to Luke 15,

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

Luke 15:1-3 (NIV)

Jesus decides it is time to get clear about this issue. So he tells three stories in a row because he **wants us to get this straight**. We are going to spend the month of Feb looking at this chapter, about the most deeply loved chapter of the Bible, because there are some very important things here.

A New Idea of Lostness

We don't think much about lostness. But it is a big idea in the Bible. When you are lost, you don't even know **where you are**, or where you **want to go**, and so you don't know **the way**. You are just **lost**. And when you are lost, you don't know what life is for and so you don't fit in and you just bump off life hard. There are **lost people today**. We forget that sometimes.

(Take out "6 in '06" prayer insert)

How People Get Lost

By Foolishness

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them."

Luke 15:4 (NIV)

Well, to be honest, that sheep just **wandered off** by itself. Sheep were famous for that... It can happen to people, too. They can just wander off. Nose to the ground. Not looking, not thinking, just wandering. All of a sudden you are lost! Know anyone who has wandered off?

By Carelessness

"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one."

Luke 15:8 (NIV)

This happens to me all the time; I carelessly leave something and forget where I left it. I loose my **car keys** all the time. I loose the **telephone** – because I don't put it back where I will know to find it. I **misplace** it.

This woman lost one of her silver coins. Just **misplaced** it. **People can get misplaced** by those who should care for them. You can get lost that way. Know anyone like that?

By Willfulness

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

Luke 15:11-12 (NIV)

This is how I got lost. I just wanted to do life my own way. I insisted. After a heartbreaking set of years, my Mom and Dad just wisely let me run it out. And I ran it out. Got really lost. Can you add another name to your list?

Foolishness and carelessness and willfulness are all ways we can get lost, but there is **another way** someone gets lost in this chapter. Remember the father had **two sons**. One left and the other one stayed home. But they **both got lost**.

Because the second one got lost...

By Goodness

But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

Luke 15:29 (NIV)

For this **second son**, it is not his badness that got him lost, but his goodness. He stayed home, did it all right, and

thought God owed him. It is not his failure but his success that tripped him up. Can you hear his heart through his words...

'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me...

With religious people the way you get lost is by keeping the rules. Then you think God owes you. **It's self-salvation.** And Jesus is saying that if you go this way, your goodness can be more of a barrier than your badness.

You know how you can tell if your goodness is getting you lost? There is a sure fire sign. Your heart gets smaller. **You don't care about lost people anymore.** You find that you just write them off. You think they are getting what they deserve.

You don't wake up at night thinking about someone who is lost. You never do. You don't worry. You don't weep. Honestly, it is not on your radar screen. **You just aren't troubled.** How's your heart. **Do you give a rip about lost people?**

Jesus does.

A New Idea of Your Value

The prevailing attitude of the Scribes and Pharisees was that lost people are a problem, that they **don't matter**, and that **you need to avoid them.** They had **a ministry of writing people off.**

But the central feature of these three stories Jesus told is that **something of great value was missing.**

*Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one...
Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one...
There was a man who had two sons...*

Luke 15:4,8,11

Lost people have great value to God.
 That sheep mattered to the shepherd...
 That coin mattered to the woman...
 Those sons mattered to that Dad...

How can you tell? Because **they searched high and low for them. The value of what's missing is shown by the search.**

The shepherd left the 99 and went after the lost sheep. The woman stopped her housework, lit a lamp, and swept the house clean till she found it. The Father stood on the porch every night and scanned the horizon. They did that because **something of great value was missing.**

Jesus wants us to get this straight. He wants to mess with how you see the world until you see the world like he sees the world, until we love who he loves. He wants to **reset the DNA** of his church. **Jesus loves lost people.** That was his reputation. The Pharisees tagged him for it again and again, and he wore it proudly.

*The Son of Man came, eating and drinking, and people say, 'Look at him! He eats too much and drinks too much wine, and he is a **friend of tax collectors and sinners.**'*

Mt 11:19 (NCV)

"Friend of sinners" was his label. Would you say it with me? That would be good to have as our label.

I want to say something personal to you. **I think we have lost our passion for lost people.** God wants us to get it back. God will give it back to us if we ask him. God will give us the

heart of Jesus for the lost. Do you want to have God's heart for lost people? Could you make that your prayer this month?

I am talking about

the **neighbor** with the barking dog and the noisy kids,
the **co-worker** who is really obnoxious,
the people who you see at the **gas station**, the **grocery**
store...

No matter their **race**, their **sex**, their **past**, or their **behavior**.
They matter.

No matter their **religion** or **nationality** or their **age** or **wealth**.
They matter.

People in **Honduras** and **Guatemala** and **Uganda** and **Juarez**
and the **Haiti** and **New Orleans** matter (mission teams this
year).

That is why we have **children's** ministries and **student**
ministries and **12 step** ministries and **senior** ministries and
counseling ministries and **hospital** visitation ministries and
divorce recovery ministries and **urban** ministries and the list
goes on and it is **not long enough** – because people matter to
God.

People in Sewickley and Sewickley Heights and Moon and
Ambridge and down in the city matter. **Even the Seattle**
Seahawks matter!

*When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called
him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! For I
must be a guest in your home today."*

*Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his
house in great excitement and joy. But the crowds were*

displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

Luke 19:5-7 (NLT)

That is **all you have to do to get started**. Just go after some people, learn their names, and **be a friend** to them. You pray for them (6 in 2006). And **let Jesus lead**. He will. Because he is the friend of sinners.