

THE TRAGEDY OF BEING LOST

Luke 15

Introduction:

1. The setting for these three parables of grace is stated in verses 1 and 2.
 - a. The enemies of our Lord had murmured from the beginning. They had seen His power to work miracles, but they ascribed it to Beelzebub. They had heard His teaching, but they were offended at it.
They had known His claim to be the Son of God, but they would not accept it.
 - b. Now they are murmuring because of Jesus' love for sinners. They are saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."
2. The purpose of these three parables is to show what God's attitude toward the lost is, and, thus, what man's attitude toward the lost should be.
3. The one point that is common to all three parables is "Rejoice." When the lost is found there is rejoicing, and these Pharisees and scribes, instead of murmuring, ought to rejoice that Jesus has come "to seek and to save the lost."
4. It is tragic to be lost. Relate the story of the little boy who wandered from home and became lost. What misery and terror filled his little heart! But it is far worse to be lost in sin. These parables suggest four ways to be lost.

Discussion

I. *The Tragedy of Carelessness — The Lost Sheep. Vs. 3-7.*

A. The figure of the shepherd, sheep and sheepfold is found many times in the scriptures. Isa. 53:6f; John 10: 1ff; Acts 20:28, etc.

1. Palestine was a land well suited for the pastoral life. Illustration: destroyed at railroad crossing. There are many points of analogy between sheep and men, e.g., proneness to wander, exposure to danger, difficulty of finding the way back, etc.

B. Many today are lost in sin through the tragedy of carelessness.

Implications:

1. **Thoughtlessness.** Many are lost, not through a deliberate forsaking of the Shepherd, but through an unconscious straying. Another figure which suggests the same thought is that of a ship drifting at sea. Heb. 2:1. Cf. Matt. 9:36, a picture of a multitude that had no real purpose in life.
 2. **Absorption in other matters.**
 - a. A lamb often at the rear of the flock may see a little stretch of green grass, and becoming absorbed with that delicious morsel, it loses consciousness of the fact that the shepherd and the flock move on and he will soon be lost.
 - b. Many are they who are carelessly absorbed in the treasures and pleasures of this life (cf. Luke 8:14; 12:16-21), or the complacency of denominational error. They are lost, not because they are mean, but because they are careless.
 3. **Lack of knowledge, spiritual interest and diligence.**
 - a. Admonitions are many to "give diligence" and "take heed."
 - b. Failure to do this means we are lost. Cf. Hosea 4:6; Acts 17:30.
- C. The tragedy of carelessness is seen almost daily.

II. *The Tragedy of Uselessness — The Lost Coin. Vs. 8-10.*

A. The lost coin was a useless coin. Money is of value only if it is used. This coin was of no value because it was "out of circulation."

B. The useless church member is a lost church member.

1. Once each member of the Lord's church was useful. If we were genuinely converted, we said, "I am Thine, O Lord, All to Thee I surrender, Take me and use me in Thy service."
2. Many have changed from useful vessels to useless vessels, from vessels of honor to vessels of dishonor (II Tim. 2:20).
3. Uselessness means: loss of zeal for the Lord, loss of concern for others, and loss of influence (savor, Matt. 5:13; radiance, Matt. 5:14ff.).
4. The useless member is the one who has quit (Luke 9:62), fallen (Gal. 5:4), does not serve the purpose that God has for him (Matt. 25:24ff.).

C. What am I worth to the Lord and His church in zeal, faithfulness,

loyalty and influence? The tragedy of uselessness will condemn many in the church.

III. *The Tragedy of Willfulness — The Prodigal Son. Vs. 11-24.*

A. The Prodigal Son was lost willfully.

- 1. He willfully asked for his portion of the substance.**
- 2. He willfully went into the far country. With his eyes wide open he went into sin.**
- 3. He willfully wasted his substance with riotous living. He had no one to blame but himself.**

B. There are many lost today for the same reason.

This implies:

1. Rebellion and defiance of authority.

a. Morally, these people say, "What I do is none of your business."

Illustration: Relate the statement of the worldly group who said, "We know we are going to hell, but we're having a good time doing it."

b. Doctrinally, this kind says, "So what? We can read that baptism is immersion, but sprinkling is just as good. We know the early disciples wore the name Christian and that only, but so what? There is nothing in a name."

2. Exaltation of my will and a desecration of God's will. "Not *Thy* will but *mine* be done."

3. Prejudice. "For this people's heart is waxed gross, And their ears are dull of hearing, And their eyes they have closed" (Matt. 13:15).

4. Greater Damnation. Cf. Luke 12:47, 48.

C. Happily though, the Prodigal Son's will was broken, he repented and returned home, and he was graciously received by his father. But willfulness, unrepented of, will result in certain condemnation.

IV. *The Tragedy of Bitterness — The Elder Brother. Vs. 25-32.*

A. This is the type who seldom considers themselves lost.

- 1. He had stayed in his father's house.**
- 2. He had served his father."Lo, these many years do I serve**

thee.

3. He was never guilty of the immoralities of his brother, "I never transgressed a commandment of thine."

V. He was lost because of his wrong attitude toward his brother.

1. He was angry, jealous and had no sympathy for his brother.

2. Bitterness toward brethren will cause us to be lost in hell as surely as the immoralities of the flesh. They are in the same class. Gal. 5:19f.

3. Love for brethren is abundantly and plainly taught. John 13:34f; I Cor. 13:13; I John 2:9-11, 3:14f.; 4:20f,

4. The elder brother represents the Pharisees and scribes who stood condemned because they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at naught" (Luke 18:9).

Conclusion:

1. These are some of the ways in which you and I can be lost:

2. Let us examine ourselves to see if it is, possible we are in one of these four classes.

3. To be lost eternally is by far the most terrible thing that could happen to anyone.

4. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

5. Will you let Him save you now by submitting to His will.