

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on September 18, 2022:**

**"Have You Felt Lost and
How Do We Qualify for the Kingdom?
(Luke 15:1-10)"**

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman, at church in the Y, shows us through the two stories of Jesus in Luke 15, that we are invited to accept our salvation given to us by God.]

Introduction:

- Have any of you ever felt lost?
- It's the kind of lost when your heart starts to well-up and you almost feel a sense of panic. Has anyone ever experienced that kind of lost-ness?
- Louise and JR told their lost stories.
- Then, Pastor Craig told a story when he experienced some panic on a trip to Washington, DC with other pastors from Ohio to attend a Promise Keepers pastoral event.
- Their bus parked outside the city and they had to walk many blocks to get on a subway, which took them a few blocks from their meeting place.
- That late afternoon, when he was going back to the bus, Pastor Craig got disconnected from the group and tried to get there alone.
- As he was having difficulty remembering even how to get back to the subway, he approached the level of panic.
- But, fortunately, he did find his way back, but you really don't want to sense that feeling of panic when you're lost.
- Now, have we ever felt lost spiritually?
- The verses we're going to look at today will answer the question, "How do we qualify for the kingdom of God", in light of what Jesus has to say about being lost.
- Now, let's remember that Jesus is still on His way to Jerusalem with His disciples, His 120 followers, as well as a large group of followers.

Luke 15:1 (NASB), Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near Jesus to listen.

- Now, in the Greek, the tax collectors are literally identified as tax farmers, who harvested taxes.
- They were also known as toll-takers on all the roads in Judea.
- These were Jewish men who paid money to the Roman government to occupy that office and have the privilege to collect the toll fees and in most cases they pocketed a lot more than they were entitled to.
- That's why tax collectors were despised.

- Now, Matthew was a tax collector, and Zacchaeus was also a tax collector. Now, both of them changed and followed Jesus.
- So, both tax collectors and sinners were despised.
- The Pharisees viewed sinners as “non-synagogue-goers” and those who weren’t engaged in their practices of righteousness.
- Interestingly, Luke tells us that the sinners wanted to come to Jesus and listen to Him, which in the Greek means “wanting to comprehend and seeking to understand.”
- This was something the religious leaders didn’t want to do.

2) And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to complain, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

- In Proverbs and Psalms, the religious were told NOT to walk with the ungodly, but Jesus seemed to continually disobey that law and command.
- Table fellowship, in the Old Testament, was a serious thing because it implies to receive and even accept.
- So, when you invited others to eat with, you invited them to be equal to you in intimate fellowship.
- In those days, it was more important who you ate with than who you had sex with.
- So, eating, back then, was not how we would think of it today.
- So, when Jesus was engaged with sinners and with tax collectors, He was inviting them into an intimate relationship, and that’s why the Pharisees got sidewise with Him on that.

3) And so He told them this parable, saying, 4) “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them,

- Here the word “lost” also carries the connotation of death and destruction.

3b) does not leave the other ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5) And when he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

- Now, who, in their right mind, would leave 99, the majority of what you have, and go after the one?
- You see, that’s what Jesus does for each of us.
- In that day, shepherds were legally, financially and morally responsible for every sheep that they tended.
- So, losing one was a big deal.
- Now, Jesus is going to take this to a much higher level, which conveys the heart of the Father, Son and Spirit.

6) And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!’

- Now, the shepherd throws a big party, rejoicing over the found lost sheep.
- Throwing a party like this – by human standards, doesn’t make sense.

- Now, Jesus will give us the spiritual meaning that's relevant for us today.

7) I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.

- Now, what do you think the Pharisees and religious leaders were thinking when Jesus said this?
- They probably didn't agree with this at all. Yet, it conveys deep meaning for us, who follow Jesus today.
- Interestingly, when Luke tells an account of what Jesus said, he usually includes a woman, which we don't see with the other gospel writers.
- Luke was an equal opportunity story teller, because women were not honored in that day and age like they should have been.

8) "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins

- Now, at that time, when a woman was married, she was given a headdress that included 10 silver coins – drachmas, which one coin was a day's wage.

8) "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp

- In those days, Palestinian homes were generally dark.

8b) and sweep the house and search carefully (diligently) until she finds it? 9) And when she has found it, she calls together her friends (female) and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found the coin which I had lost!'

- Now, let's think about that. The party she's going to have with her friends will probably cost more than the value of the coin that was lost and then found.
- Jesus is adding some shock value to this and will show that the extravagant love that God has for us and how He views each of us.

10) In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God (Semitic way of saying "presence of God") over one sinner who repents (sinner's response to being found)."

- Jesus is making the point to these sinners and is challenging these religious leaders, who thought that it was a travesty that Jesus was spending this intimate kind of time with sinners.

What can we learn from these verses and...How do we qualify for the Kingdom of God?

- How many of you here today want to qualify for the kingdom of God?
 - So, the question is – how do we qualify?
 - And, here are the answers – 2 things qualify us.
1. We must be lost and dead (spiritually). (Everybody – all humans – have those qualifications.) We are born lost and spiritually dead.

2. With these qualifications, in his/her own time and way, the Spirit will come seeking you, will find you, and will save you.
 - Was there anything that the lost sheep did to seek his shepherd?
 - Also, was there anything that the lost coin did to seek its owner?
 - Amazingly, no! It was all about the shepherd and the woman going after the lost sheep and the lost coin.
 - Can we let this sink into our hearts?

3. Jesus said he came to seek and save the lost and spiritually dead and He accomplishes what He came to do, which was His mission from the Father.
 - Let's remember what the father said in the Parable of the Lost Son: the father said about his son that he was dead and now he's alive.
 - He also said that his son was lost and now he's found.
 - And, interestingly, the father never let his son give his repentance speech, but instead entered into that rejoicing party.

4. But, isn't there something I have to do?

5. The answer is, "Yes". We have to respond to being found and saved.

6. But, our response is not required to affect the objective fact that Jesus has saved us by grace and grace alone.
 - Now, this is a slippery slope, because we first have to realize that if there's anything we must do, then it's not about grace and grace alone.
 - Now, for us to subjectively or personally experience that salvation, then we have to believe it and respond to it.
 - And our response comes from the realization that, in fact, it has taken place.

 - So, when we come to truly understand who we are and what Jesus has accomplished on the cross – he has reconciled all humanity with His death and resurrection.
 - And until we come to that personal understanding, we are included without a clue.
 - But, when we come to that recognition of that gospel message, then our hearts are opened up to what has happened.

 - So, do we see that qualifying for the kingdom has nothing to do with what we do, but rather it's all about what has already been done by Jesus?
 - And, it's only when we realize that and the Holy Spirit removes those scales of blindness, we will then see who we are and then we can rejoice in that fact.

7. So, the response comes from our realization that it has in fact taken place.

8. I was lost and dead, spiritually. Now I'm found and saved. So, let's celebrate!
 - So, that's what we're seeing in these two stories in Luke's gospel.
 - Luke was writing to those Hellenistic Jews, who were marginalized and thought they were good for nothing, and Luke is telling them – that's not the case.

9. Our response is elicited by the Spirit and usually involves hearing Jesus and the gospel.
 - So, when we hear Jesus and when we hear the gospel, the Holy Spirit then works through us, which is that accepting element that is receiving element and responding element.
 - Even our response comes through the Spirit – we don't respond on our own.

10. Our response is required to experience subjectively or personally the salvation that has already happened objectively by God.
 - That was God's plan from the beginning as Revelation tells us that Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world.
 - And when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, do we find a God who has rejected them?
 - Or, do we find a God that came seeking them?
 - They wanted to hide themselves, because there's something about sin that creates fear and doubt and shame and guilt.

11. The Spirit enables us to realize we have been lost, dead, and headed for destruction.
 - That's how Adam and Eve felt after they sinned and that's why they removed themselves from having fellowship with God.
 - So, the Holy Spirit works through that process in bringing a not-yet-believer to believe.

12. In the next story in Luke 15, the father is quoted as saying, "This son of mine was dead, and is now alive, he was lost, and now he is found. And so, let's celebrate!"

13. Each of these stories, when we "come to ourselves", are all told in connection with repentance.
 - So, we need to find out – what does repentance mean?
 - And, what does repentance do and accomplish?

14. So, repentance is an English attempt at the Greek word *metanoia*, which means a change of mind.

15. *Metanoia* also means to rethink – usually a positive connotation with a change of heart and attitude.

16. The Greek conveys the Old Testament terms that implied "turning from."

17. With a change of heart and attitude, it logically follows a change in behavior.
 - So, when we come to this point of coming to ourselves of accepting or responding or reacting, it's now a re-thinking of what we believed before that I was lost and dead, but now re-thinking and believing that in fact that wasn't true, because God has already taken care of that for us.
 - What Jesus did accomplished that for you and me.

- And so, when we re-think that, we come to a completely different change or paradigm shift and how we now think about things.
- We now have belief in and we have trust in and we have faith in God and what He says.
- And, then out of that, comes a change of behavior.
- And now, we want to love God with all our heart, mind and soul and to love our neighbor.

18. The change of mind involves a change of who Jesus is, and how to love God and neighbor and how to share in the life of the Triune God.

- This all comes about when we believe who we are and whose we are.

19. Repentance involves in a turning from self and the ungodly ways of the world to walking the way Jesus walked, a growing process of transformation brought about through the spirit.

- That's the path that all of us are on.
- So, when we accept that forgiveness, then we go through a period of time of sanctification, which is this on-going transformation process in our lifetime to the ultimate point of glorification in the kingdom to come.
- Now, some have asked then why do we bother reaching out to others so they recognize who they are, because they will eventually come to that understanding when Christ returns?
- Pastor Craig said he would rather not go through 70 years of life without knowing who he was and without experiencing the love, the joy, and the peace of God.
- And, if he has the opportunity to share God's fruits of the Spirit with someone else who hasn't experienced those things, he will gladly do that.

20. Repentance does not precede being found by Jesus, nor does it precede the forgiveness of one's sins. It's a response, not a requirement, to being found and forgiven.

- Do all of us believe that?
- You know, there was a time when our church believed that our sins were finally covered only after we repented.
- If this is true, this means that God has had to change how He thinks about us.

21. Christianity is the only world religion where we don't seek God, but God seeks us – it's been that way from the very beginning in the Garden of Eden – God sought the sinner.

- In any other religion, the individual has to seek God to find him/her.
- And, there's a treadmill they have to run in order to accomplish things they must do.
- But, not Christianity.
- To do these other things, involves a tragic misunderstanding.
- If you're told that you have to do something to affect the grace of God, it's heresy, because it's grace and faith alone not plus other things.
- It's grace and faith alone because of what Jesus did for us and what the Holy Spirit does through us.

- The true good news about the gospel is that we qualify automatically by being lost and dead, spiritually.
- And the true good news is that God did everything for us, because He loves us out of His grace, which can be unimaginable.
- We carry so much baggage with us at times that we just can't fathom that a loving God would do so much for us.
- Belief, trust, and faith in what God has accomplished for us is such good news.

Closing Prayer:

Eternal loving Father, Son and Spirit, we thank You so much for the good news of Your gospel – that You have included us, saved us and welcomed us into Your heart. And, Father, we pray for those who are included without a clue and don't understand this and don't realize who they are and what life could be like knowing they could have those pressures removed.

Father, we invite ourselves into that process to just open up our eyes to those whom You are working with. Allow us to participate, allow us to share that good news and allow us to be a part in knowing that in heaven, You and Your angels, the 24 Elders and all the majesty that's described in Revelation, can be a part in such rejoicing, when we share that message and through Your Spirit open their eyes to what You have done and the beauty of what Jesus has accomplished.

We pray, Father, that You help us to participate; help us to share that gospel message in ways that is understood because it may seem like a pipe dream. But, we know it's not and we thank You for that.

And we thank You for Your such love and mercy that brought it about. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.