

Lost and Found

Sermon – Marshall Reeves – 06/25/2023

We hear a great deal in church vernacular about the terms lost and found. It is defined differently by different people and nowhere more so than in the modern Evangelical church. As a result, there's confusion as to its meaning, particularly for those of us who came out of the denominational churches, not to mention those still in them. So, I want to take a look at these words for they're used frequently in the gospels and most often by the Lord Himself. There's no better scripture to illustrate this than in Luke 15, the parable of the two sons. So, let's begin there.

Luke 15:

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons;

12 and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.'

And he divided his living between them, or in other words He gave them His life.

It may sound a bit shocking in family conversation until we understand that it had been God's plan from the beginning as we see in

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

Wait, I thought this was a conversation with the Father. The Trinity cannot be separated for as we hear in 2 Cor 5:19 "God (the Father) was in Christ (the Son) reconciling the world to Himself..."

So, the Father agreed with him without hesitation that they should receive their portion or inheritance. The word here in Greek is 'meros' and is the root of 'martia', translated as sin or hamartia. 'Ha' meaning without or loss of and 'martia' as form or portion, which we'll discuss further. So why did the Father agree? After all, heirship takes place after the death of the testator or the one bequeathing. It's for this very reason He agrees to do it, for His heart's desire is to restore them to their true selves, man in perfect union with God. As He tells the older brother later in vs. 31 "my son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours," including His life.

13 "Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living.

14 And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want."

Was this God's punishment? Hardly, for even though we may think so at times we live in a contingent creation driven by the possibilities mankind chooses. No, on its own sin is its own punishment.

Psa 115:16 "The heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's but the earth He has given to the children of men."

15 "So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine."

Country means a vast expanse, a wilderness or desert even an abyss, which is a space between two fixed places; possibly a mental or emotional state, a paranoia, meaning to walk beside oneself, almost in a surreal state; to have more than one mindset caused most often by a high state of anxiety, worry and even fear. Jesus speaks to this in His sermon on the mount.

Matt 6:22 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is single your whole body will be full of light

23 But if your eye is double, your whole body is full of darkness."

Single and double refer to being single minded or double minded. Paranoia, for example, is to be double minded.

I believe this is the state of many believers today because of the convoluted gospel that the church at large peddles as Good News! I believe fear was man's initial reaction to God in the Garden and it's been perpetuated by religion ever since. That's why scripture tells us

'Perfect love casts out fear for fear involves condemnation and there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus!'

When we've come to see that God is love in His very essence, the door is opened to see who we are. It is then that we enter His peace and rest for fear cannot coexist in Agape.

We've been told on one hand God loves us but on the other only if we meet His requirements because God is not simply love, He's also justice, holiness, wrath, etc. all in equal measure. What a schizophrenic line. All His attributes flow from His essence, that being His love. 1 Cor 13:2 supports this.

We read "and though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and have not love I am nothing and though I have all faith so that I can remove mountains but have not love I am nothing."

So here we see two of His attributes identified, the all-knowing of omniscience and the all-power of omnipotence, yet in both cases He says that even though He possesses these things that if they didn't flow from His love, He is nothing. He couldn't be God. So, when someone tells you that 'God is love but' or 'God is love and' ... simply refer to this verse and explain politely that their position is impossible.

16 And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything.

His hunger had reached painful proportions. We see in Luke 14:13 "But when you have a feast always invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind."

Each of these words describe the infirmed, the condition he was beginning to identify with. But he was yet to see how faithful and true God is for he had no idea the feast that awaited him from His Father.

17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger!'"

The word perish is the same word for "lost" and hunger means destitution and lack. The younger brother portrays the non-Jewish world and the new covenant and his older brother Israel and the old covenant. The gentile world had no idea about any kind of God other than pagan ones to whom

appeasement, begging, sacrifice and menial service were required. They didn't even have the Law of Moses for that had been given exclusively to Israel, however, even with it, the attitude toward God sounds very similar. It's the point Jesus made in John 8:7 in the story of the woman caught in adultery when He said let him without sin be the first to cast a stone, (symbolic of the law) then in vs. 9) then the Pharisees, being convicted by their conscience went out one by one beginning with the oldest even to the last, those who held to the Law and the old covenant. The new covenant is a much better covenant as the young brother was soon to find out.

His conclusion for now, however, was:

18 "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."

The best that a transactional darkened mindset can conjure is I will pay for my debt with my sacrifice of hard work, effort and improved behavior because I know I'm unworthy and nothing more than a sinner saved by grace; oh, and don't forget totally depraved. Nevertheless, anything would be better than this. In a nutshell this is what takes place in virtually any modern church in America as we're directed to make public profession, say the Sinner's Prayer, repent properly and promise to sacrifice for the kingdom. The system of sacrifices apparently isn't over.

20 "And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him."

Did he hear something, experience something? Was it the faint melody of a song forgotten, a dream he couldn't quite recall? Or, even though he couldn't understand it yet, was it the Father drawing him with an almost imperceptible resonance deep within?

Arose or arise is the Greek word 'anistemi', meaning to stand but under your own strength whereas 'histemi' means to cause to stand and is actually the root of the word for crucify. On the cross we were stood up in Him with arms outstretched in love for all humanity. Jesus is the Way who always brings us to the Father and the Father to us. That's why it says when he was still a long way off God responded making up any separation in time and space with urgency and immediacy. His compassion can little tolerate the pain He observes within us.

We have no real idea of the destructive effects of sin but we get a glimpse from the prophet Isaiah. We see an interesting statement in 52:14 "Just as many were appalled at you, so His appearance was marred beyond that of any man, and His form more than the sons of man."

Again, in Isa 53:2 "...He has no form or splendor, that when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him. 3)He is therefore rejected by men..."

In both verses we read that He had no form, the same Hebrew word in each. In the NT in Greek, I shared that the word sin is to have no form or portion, to miss the mark or blueprint. The Hebrew gives us a better description of what this looks like for to have no form means to be without beauty or fairness of appearance and most importantly without union.

Most would say that 52:14 describes Christ on the cross and 53:2 was His unremarkable everyday appearance. I believe they both refer to the crucifixion.

2 Cor 5:14 "If One died for all then all died."

and in 5:21 "For He made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God." How did this happen? How did He who knew no sin become sin? Because He took us, sinful man, into Himself.

Heb 10:19 "...having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus 20 By a new and living way which He consecrated for us through the veil, that is His flesh." Which was opened up by the soldier's spear.

He circumcised our flesh in His death i.e. He cleansed us, redeemed us and gave us a new life, a resurrection life. He is truly the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Our bodies are as soft, clear and beautiful as that of a new baby's.

Prior, however, sin had ravaged our minds and bodies and this is the depiction we're given in Isaiah. It's a picture of us! It's not Him who was without sin, it's us! Jesus became sinful man at the cross and in the process of making us whole once again we were given a glimpse of what sin had done to us. By taking "all" sin upon Himself His appearance was exceedingly marred, portraying an image without any beauty and despised and rejected by men. Sin is not who we are, it's a parasite that literally sucks the life out of us and leaves a perverted and twisted version of who we are. It's the loss of memory that results in loss of identity.

That's why in

Isa. 53:4 we read that He has borne (same as forgive in Greek) our griefs which means He lifted off and removed the sickness of sin and carried our sorrows, the pain sin caused. Carried here means to bear for 'Love bears all things and endures all things'. We were never designed to deal with the heavy burden of sin. Carolyn Leaf, a modern neuroscientist and author says that we should think on those things that are true, noble, pure, lovely, etc. because if we could see what a negative thought does to our mind, we'd never have another.

No, the true person of Christ is spoken of in

Psa 96:9 "Oh worship the Lord in beauty and holiness! Tremble before Him all the earth."

Worship means to bow before but I believe it corresponds to the word bless, to kneel in adoration. To kneel before beauty is one thing but to kneel in beauty suggests a picture of both parties being revealed with an indistinguishable beauty in one another. For we are immersed in the radiant glory and holiness of His being. Surely the author of all created beauty must be the beauty in all beauty.

The word to "tremble" before Him is a poor translation in context. It's the Hebrew word 'chuw' whose primary meaning is to whirl or dance. It is in this place that we come to know even as we are known. Our response is to make merry and celebrate which always included singing and dancing for the Jewish people. It's the point of the parable. That is to celebrate, finally knowing who our Father is, thus authenticating our very being.

21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; 23 and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry;

Notice how The Father doesn't dignify the lies coming from his son about who he claims himself to be. He completely ignores them because God only deals in truth. This is an object lesson for all of us. When we grovel in prayer about our sins and how awful we are He may listen for a time out of compassion but

eventually He'll walk away from the conversation because He's tired of the subject. This demonstration, however, reveals the feelings of love and truth concerning each of us. It reveals the value and worth of our deepest self. To place the signet ring of God (His authority) on our finger as well as His robe around us signifying our royal priesthood, is a far cry from being nothing but a depraved sinner.

24 for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry. Jesus doesn't go into what would be required of the Trinity in order to accomplish this end for they are not only love but divine humility.

This is the misunderstood love of the Father revealed in Christ Jesus.

Compare what we read concerning the Law in

Deuteronomy 21:

18 "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they chastise him, will not give heed to them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, 20 and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

Does this sound like the narrative shared by Jesus in the parable? Or is it the attitude of the Law revealed in the older brother? That of comparison and judgment with an end toward punishment. Paul tells us in Romans that:

"Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the Law."

and in Galatians:

"If there had been a law given which could have given life then righteousness would have been by the law."

'But righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ.'

25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received ('Iambano'-lay hold of) him safe and sound (and restored him to wholeness and health).

28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,

He was breaking the very law he so emphatically claimed to adhere to by his disobedience and dishonoring of his Father.

The word angry actually means to be in a rage. It's the meaning of the Hebraism of weeping and gnashing of teeth in

Matt 13:

42 "and they will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 "Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH LIKE THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears, let him hear."

For our God is a refining fire of love! (Module 7)

And why rage in a scenario such as this? Mankind and his fallen mind cleave to the idea of proving himself through behavior. It's simply a continuation of eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Thayers Interlinear Bible defines evil as a futile mentality of hardship, labor and annoyance. Then the fruit of the tree consists of a total religious mindset of performance and behavior. This is the fallen mindset of Adam which is still pervasive in the church today. His response to his Father betrays this attitude.

29 but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served (slaved for) you, and I never disobeyed your command; (Such vanity; He sounds just like the rich young ruler, I have kept all your laws from my youth) yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."

Notice he fails to include the Father in his ideal celebration. Furthermore, the Greek word for friends is 'phileo' meaning brotherly love. It betrays his idea of relationship with the Father. There's nothing wrong with brotherly love, but it's not the agape that comprises our absolute union with God in Christ.

By disobeying and dishonoring the Father, he broke the very law he so fervently claimed to follow. The reality was that he was simply following the desires of his own flesh for that's where religion is sourced and that's where it always leads.

30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots (as a harlot, interchangeable in context; 'pornay'-a whore or ' pornos'-a whoremonger or male prostitute), you killed for him the fatted calf?!"

He makes clear with the statement "this son of yours" that he is not related and therefore no longer a part of this family. He can't call brother one who has played the harlot with harlots even though when the law is foremost in the mind, sin abounds. Jesus said to lust is the same as having committed the act. It's the same scenario as the Pharisees with the woman caught in adultery. Could he actually cast the first stone because he had no sin?

31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

The Greek word here for son isn't 'huios', meaning a full grown son, but 'teknon', a young child, too young to yet inherit.

Gal 4:1 "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave (to sin) though he is master to all. (For we are all Christ's and Abraham's seed) 2 But is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the Father."

Nevertheless, the Father refused to let him go no matter his words or behavior. Rather He was hoping to help him see that he would be receiving his full inheritance as a grown son in due time.

32 It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."

To be brought from death to life and lost to found is one and the same. For to be lost is to perish in death and to be found is to be restored to life. **To be found is to come to know the truth of who our Father is.**

John captures it in his gospel in 1:12

"As many as identified with Him He gave the assurance of being sons of God, having been convinced of their true design and origin." Mirror Bible

13 "who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

I encourage each of you to make merry and be glad today for you have come to know who you are.

God bless and amen!