

Farquhar Macleod: Luke 15

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Date: 09 April 2017

Preacher: Guest Preacher

- [0 : 0 0] Now, as the Lord may be pleased to help us and guide us by His Spirit, I just turn now to the portion of Scripture that we read together in St. Luke's Gospel and Chapter 15.
- St. Luke's Gospel and Chapter 15. At the beginning of this chapter we see that Jesus has gathered crowds round about them.
- Jesus always gathered crowds about them. For he spoke to the people, he was so loving, he was so kind, he was so gentle, and he spoke to them in a way that was easily understood.
- Not the big philosophy that goes over your heads, but he spoke to them in a way that even little children could understand.
- And Jesus was and is a friend of the poor and the outcasts of this world. But there was those who grumbled against Jesus.
- [1 : 2 3] There were the scribes and there were the Pharisees. They were not pleased at all that Jesus was, as they said themselves, that he was acquainting himself and eating with publicans and sinners.
- But that is what Jesus left the realms of glory for. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.
- And if Jesus didn't do that, what hope would you and I have? He did not come to get the righteousness, there were none.
- He came to seek and to save sinners like you and I. And the Pharisees and the scribes were not pleased with this at all.
- And we see that the tax collectors of that day, they were hated people. They were despised. They collected taxes for the Roman employers and what they did was, instead of collecting what they should collect, they collected in excess and made themselves rich in the process.
- [2 : 5 5] And because of that, the people hated them, they despised them. They saw them as outcasts of society and this is what the Pharisees and the scribes were mourning about.
- Jesus is drawing sinners and publicans and tax collectors to himself. He is eating with them. Did he not invite himself to the house of Sargeas for a meal?
- You remember when Sargeas was in the tree when Jesus was passing by and Jesus stopped underneath the tree and he said, Sargeas, I must call at your house today.
- He was in the house of Levi and the Pharisees and the scribes, they were not pleased that Jesus mingled with what they called the outcasts of society.
- One of the commentators describes those tax collectors as quizlings and traitors.
- [4 : 1 0] They made themselves rich at the expense of others. And the Pharisees scrambled, this man welcomes sinners and he eats with them.
- Now the Pharisees and scribes, they were known for their strict observation of the law. The law as it is related to outward ritual.

And these religious leaders thought that they were better than anyone else and they looked down their noses at other people because they thought themselves to be the righteous ones, the good ones, but they were actually the ones who were blind.

Their spiritual eyes were closed. Jesus was standing in the midst of them. They saw the miracles, the hearth is preaching and yet they did not know who he was or even were still they did not want to know who he was.

They were members of a religious sect who looked down on others and thought themselves to be so good. But what about yourselves, my friends?

[5 : 32] Those scribes and Pharisees, they put a stumbling block in front of others. Do we put a stumbling block before a brother or a sister with our self-righteous attitudes and actions?

God forbid that any of us would be a stumbling block to any who would want to come to Jesus.

Or do we worship Him with open hands and encourage those who would not normally come to church? Do we encourage them to come with us to the house of God?

We cannot point a finger at anyone else. We must start at our own doorstep first and work out from there.

In the passage of scripture we read together, Jesus has told three of His most famous stories or parables, a short story with a meaning.

[6 : 52] And in the time we have left to us today, I would like us to look at the parable of the lost sheep.

In choosing this illustration of the lost sheep, Jesus knew it would appeal to a lot of the people that He was addressing that day.

Because amongst the people gathered together there would have been many shepherds hearing and listening to Jesus.

And the side of the Jordan valley yielded rich grazing for large flocks of sheep.

And the shepherds in those days, they didn't go around with a brace of dogs or three dogs and chasing the sheep ahead of them. Like we do, those shepherds, they went ahead of their sheep.

[7 : 57] And the sheep knew the shepherd's voice and the sheep followed on. And about 100 sheep is what the commentator tells us is the normal sized flock that one shepherd could adequately look after and care for.

And Jesus pines a beautiful picture of the sheep that went astray, the sheep that wandered away from the rest of the flock.

Dispatched the shepherd's tender loving care and his watchful eye, now and again a sheep would wander away, away from the rest of the flock.

Munching away happily at the green pasture, she said, went further and further away. And after a while looking up and seeing no, hearing no, bleating and seeing no flock around her in their panic, that sheep could easily go further and further away.

It could even fall into a precipice or down into a steep gully. It could have hurt itself. It could be lying there at the mercy of wild beasts.

[9 : 29] Lying there, helpless and lost. Is that not a picture of the young woman, of the young man who leaves the house, the family home, the shelter of the family home for the first time?

They go out into this world. No restraints. No one to hold them back.

No one to lead them or guide them. They are free to do as they wish. And you know, my friends, we all were there ourselves.

The saying goes, we were young once as well. We wanted to see the world. We wanted to test the world.

And they wander further and further down the broad path of sin until they are helpless and lost.

[10 : 33] Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 6 says, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have all turned to our own ways.

And as we turn to our own ways. We as Christians, I don't know you here today, but I'm sure there are many Christians in here today.

We as Christians had our day. We also drank the broken systems of this world.

We also like sheep went astray and we dug for ourselves wells that hold no water.

And I remember in my own younger days, I used to love the dance hall and I used to love the parties.

[11 : 37] But when God came into my life, those are the things that I further pushed away from me. Those are the things that have no more desire for.

But that is the way of the world. That's the way the world goes. The apostle of Paul of all said, I am the chief of sinner. Oh Paul, how can you say that when I am the chief of sinner?

And there are many Christians and they will say the same thing. I am. And I don't say that today. Flippantly I say it because I see myself as the chief of sinner.

But you know that are those Christians who will always say that they have always been good. They feel that they have been good, that they have done no wrong.

But what does God say in his word? All have come short of my glory, all sin against me. Every day that is God's testimony of you and me.

[12 : 52] Are you this morning still outside the fold of Jesus Christ? Well my friend, if you are.

Remember this and this is an encouragement for you. Every sin had their day and every sinner has their future.

And no matter how far you have gone down the path of sin. No matter how bad you think you are.

No matter how deep you have sunk into the mighty pit of sin. The everlasting arms reach down deeper to lift you up again.

All the love of Jesus Christ is reaching down into the mighty pit where we all were to lift us up to put our feet on a rock and a new song in our mouth.

[14 : 05] A story was told of a young man who got tired of the restraints of the family home.

And he decided he would go out and see the world and what the world had to offer him. And very soon he forgot his parents, he forgot the family home.

He made new friends, he got on well, he enjoyed his freedom. He did as he wanted, he was carefree.

And the years went by. And he began to think of, he began to think of the home again.

And he wondered to himself, is my father and mother still alive? Is the family home still standing?

[15 : 13] And he decided he would write a note to his mother. And he would ask his mother in the note, I'm coming home.

If you want me back home again, ma'am, won't you hang a white handkerchief on the clothes slide? And as the train goes by, I will see it.

A day and a date was set, and on the sad day, as the train sped by the house, there was no handkerchief on the slide.

But a great big white sheet was billowing in the wind. Such was the mother's love for her wayward son.

And that is the way that Jesus loves you here this morning. That is the way that Jesus loved the prodigal son so far away, where no one, he was starving to death.

[16 : 26] And one day he thought to himself, I am going home to my father. And he said to himself, I am coming home.

I am sick and tired of what the world has to offer. I am coming home.

And Jesus loves the sinner here today. He hates the sin, but he loves the sinner, and that is what you and I are.

We are sinners. His blessed heart is bursting with love for the wayward sinner. And the hymn writer of all, he penned these beautiful words.

We were trying to tell the little, lovely little children here today. Jesus' love is so wonderful. It's so high you can't get over it, so low you can't get under it, so wide you can't get round it.

[17 : 32] Jesus' love is all around us. And Jesus' love for yourself this morning, it passes all human understanding.

And his desire is that none should perish, but that all should have everlasting life, 2 Peter 3 and 9.

And as we move on, as time is going by so quickly, as we move on, we see that health is at hand for the lost sheep.

The shepherd at even time, he is gathering his sheep into the sheepfold. For every night the shepherd of Palestine, he took his sheep home and he locked them in the sheepfold so that they would be saved for the night.

And as he counted the sheep one by one, he noticed that there was one missing. And the shepherds of Palestine, they loved their sheep so much, they were precious to them.

[18 : 48] And is that the way that you are for Jesus today? Good precious soul. It's so precious to him. And he doesn't want you to be lost, and all thought of rest and refreshment or anything like that departed from the mind of the shepherd as soon as he noticed that one of the sheep was missing.

And he leaves the 90 and 9 in the shelter of the fold. And is set out to scour the hillside for his missing sheep.

He knows the wild and steep valleys. He knows the gullies well where a sheep could stray in and get lost or even fall over a precipice.

And in the darkness he picks his way through rocks and briars and thorns. Until in the distance he hears the faint bleed of the sheep.

And he makes his way towards the sound and pushing his way through bramble and briars and thorn bushes until he finds the sheep where it had fallen.

[20 : 33] And that is the way Jesus is with ourselves. He is out in the cold and on inviting hills of iniquity looking for the poor lost soul.

The soul that is lost, dead in trespasses and in sin. And Jesus this morning is out there looking for yourself if you have still not made your peace with him.

He has found the sheep that was lost and instead of driving it harshly home before him, as Jesus said in verse 5, and when he had found it, he layeth it gently upon his shoulders and he rejoices.

O the rejoicing amongst the angels of heaven over one sinner that repented, and joy among the people of God when one lost sheep comes back to the fold.

He brings his sheep home untenderly and gently. He lays it down in the fold.

[21 : 58] He looks after it. He feeds it. He turns to its nests. And after he turns it, he calls his neighbours and his friends and he rejoices with them.

I have found my sheep that was lost. What a wonderful picture of Jesus' love for the wayward sinner.

That is what Jesus is doing for yourself today. And those cold, dark and dangerous slopes searching for it.

The hymn writer said none of the rants I have ever known. How deep were the waters crossed? Or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through ere he found his sheep that was lost?

And as the shepherd was drawn to the faint blit of that sheep. So Jesus is waiting to hear even the slightest moan, the slightest groan of prayer that rises up from the soul that is lost.

[23 : 16] The blitting of the sheep is what attracted the shepherd to it. And Jesus is listening as you sit in your pew today.

Is he hearing the tiniest groan, the whimper of prayer rising up that will attract him to you?

You know my friends, a lot of people will say that there is nothing that they can do to save themselves.

What they say, and I've heard people say this, if I'm going to be saved I will be saved anyway. There is nothing I can do. But what does the Bible say?

Luke chapter 11 and verse 9, ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you.

[24 : 24] And Jesus is listening this morning for the tiniest fitter whimper of prayer that rises up from the soul that is dead in trespasses and sin, the soul that is lost.

The prayer of the poor in the destitute he will not despise. Are you this morning calling out to Jesus?

You're calling to him to come and save you? Are you calling as the prodigal, I am coming home? I have given most of my life to the world, but I am coming home, Lord.

You take what is left of my life and you use it for your glory. And when Jesus hears that tiniest whimper, he will be by your side.

He will not be slow. And he will raise you up so gently, so lovingly, so tenderly.

[25 : 55] He will uphold you, he will sustain you, and he will so lovingly tell you, I will never leave you nor forsake you now that you're mine.

You can say along with the hymnwriter Francis Harold Rowley, I was lost, but Jesus found me, found the ship that went astray, raised me up and gently led me back into the narrow way.

He will keep me till the river rolls its watershot my feet. Then he'll bear me safely over, made by grace for glory met.

What a wonderful God we have, what a patient God. He is more willing to elevate poor and hell-deserving sinners like you and me, and put us on an equal standing with His only beloved Son.

There was a story told about a young lad that was out on the hills looking for one of his father's lost lambs, and the night had set in.

[27 : 28] And there was a company of soldiers having been marching all day, and they came across this young, distressed lad.

And after telling the soldiers what he was doing, the commanding officer ordered his men to spread out all over the hillside in search of the lost lamb.

And they searched for out, and there was nothing to be found. And the commanding officer ordered his men home.

And in the morning, when the officer attended, the young boy that attended to him, when he went to wake him up, he found that the officer was fast asleep, which was very unusual because the commanding officer was usually the first to have.

He gave him another quarter of an hour, he went again, he was still fast asleep. And after another quarter of an hour, he had to wake him up.

[28 : 53] And as the old warrior rubbed sleep from his eyes, he peeled back the bedclothes, and there was the lamb, his arms.

After sending his men home, he kept on the search until he found the lamb that was lost.

That is what Jesus is doing for you today. He is searching, and he never gives up the search.

He is out there in the cold, in dark hills of sin and iniquity. He's looking for his lost sheep, looking for his lost lambs.

Jesus not only put his life in danger, searching for the lost sheep and the lost lambs, but he laid his life down.

[30 : 07] He laid it down for you and for me.

What a blessed sacrifice. He did it so that you and I might live, that we could have life eternal through his sacrifice.

What are you going to do with this Jesus today? This youth pair rising up from the seat where you are sitting, Jesus is listening.

He wants you to come to himself and all who come to him, repenting of their sins, seeking his mercy and forgiveness, his promise is that he will never cast you aside.

What are you going to do with him today? Only you can answer that question. Amen and may the Lord be pleased to bless to us all anything that is on the mindset of the Spirit.

[31 : 30] That is the Spirit.