

Scriptures: Exodus 32:7-14; Luke 15:1-10

Partnering with the Gideons

The sermon series we've been looking at, *Having Words with Jesus*, is a great tie-in for this Sunday. We've just heard some stories of people who have been blessed by the Gideons. They're stories of lives changed by having words with Jesus – literally – through the Bibles that are printed and put into countless locations each year. Us partnering with the Gideons is a great opportunity to draw people into closer relationship with Jesus. And many times we hear of folks being in crisis – ready to give up on life – and someone, somewhere, somehow puts God's word into their hands, and saves their life. Jesus wants us to do those sorts of things. This morning we're going to look at a couple parables Jesus tells, where He talks specifically about this. Turn with me to Luke 15:1-10. **Read Luke 15:1-10.**

This passage opens with a couple key details which we need to make very clear. First, Jesus was hanging out with the “wrong crowd,” Scripture records that “the tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were gathering around to hear Him,” (Luke 15:1) and “sinners” is even in quotes there. It's what other folks were saying – and we find out who's doing the saying, which is detail two – “The Pharisees and teachers of the law muttered, ‘This Man welcomes sinners and eats with them,’” (verse 2). How scandalous!

Two Parables of Jesus

Jesus knew all the scuttlebutt the Pharisees were spreading, so He tells them two parables – two stories – that He uses to teach some valuable lessons. First, He tells the parable of the lost sheep. We know this familiar story. There are 100 sheep, and one wanders off, so the shepherd leaves the 99 and goes searching for the lost one. When he finds it, he joyfully carries it back to the flock and tells all his friends (Luke 15:4-6, paraphrased).

The second parable, the parable of the lost coin, is similar to the first. In that story, a woman – and I can't explain why this is, but every time I read this parable, I picture an old woman stooped with age – who has 10 silver coins, and one has been lost. She's misplaced it. It's not with the rest, so she frantically cleans her whole house looking for the silver coin. She finally finds it, and she joyfully tells all her friends and neighbors about it, (Luke 15:8-9a paraphrased). She even goes so far as to tell them, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin!” (verse 9b).

What the Parables Mean

Down through the ages theologians and Bible scholars have debated about the deeper meaning of who the various things in these parables – and in the other one, the parable of the prodigal son, which Jesus tells immediately after our passage today –

represent. Jesus, though, makes it pretty clear. In regards to the sheep, He says, “I tell you in the same way there will be more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous ones who do not need to repent,” (verse 7), and “In the same way, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents,” (verse 10).

He calls us, the Church – us sinners who by the grace of His shed blood He’s reforming into saints – to go after the lost. He expects us to be like the shepherd, leave the herd, and go out seeking the lost. Because that’s what He did for us – through those saints who came before us. And the lost are all over the place! If you leave here today, and go anyplace with people around – you’ll find them. You’ll see them. People who don’t know who Jesus is and what He’s done for them at the cross and the empty tomb.

He Gives the Task and Tools

They’ve maybe heard about Him, but they don’t know Him. So, it’s our job – He gives us the task and the tools – to sweep through our society and get the job done, of making Him known. And in that process, He also expects us to clean it up and find the lost. Similar to how the old woman swept through her house looking for her lost coin.

We have an amazing partnership with the Gideons – a group of Christ-loving people who are on the front lines, so to speak, in so many places. They’re doing exactly this: seeking out, and rescuing the lost, by introducing them, literally, to the Word made flesh. They’re introducing people to the One who laid glory and life itself aside on Good Friday, and then He picked it back up on Easter morning! What a privilege, and a joy to be able to work together, to draw people closer to Jesus Christ, and to give God all the glory! Amen!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, You continue to love the lost and wandering. You continue to rejoice over all who repent. Come among us, and in Your mercy and love, redeem us from being lost, rescue us from our wandering, restore us from our brokenness, release us from our bondage, and receive us, and those we share You with, into Your family through Jesus Christ. Amen.