



LOST& FOUND

LUKE 15

Have you ever lost or misplaced something? Maybe your car keys or your wallet. Or you've lost a pet. You search high and low without success. You hanker for it to return home. You call the RSPCA because they are in the business of caring for animals, including those lost. But in the end all you can do is hope and wait.



a) In Luke 15 we soon come to understand that Jesus is also very interested in the 'lost and found' business. For Jesus, his concern is for those who are lost from God's family because of their present rebellion against God. For Jesus, it's all important to find those lost, and to welcome them into God's family, into the kingdom of God.

But ...there are those who don't care about 'lost' people. Read Luke 15:1-3 and Acts 10:23b-28.

Who doesn't care and for what reason?

b) Jesus' response is to tell three stories. For the first two stories read 15:4-10.

Summarise each story in your own words.

Story 1.

Story 2.

What's common to both stories?

c) Rejoicing over the finding of something lost takes on a whole new meaning for Jesus when it applies to people who repent. (i) Is there ever a time to be satisfied with 99%?

(ii) How would you respond to the comment: "The church [referring to the building] is full so why worry about anyone else?"

THINK ABOUT IT:

In hindsight, where might you still be if that was the attitude of God, or of those Christians who knew you before you repented of your rebellion?

d) For the third story read verses 11 to 32 carefully. Note that Jesus isn't dealing with the whole Gospel message but with one great fact of the Father's pardoning love. This

doesn't diminish the importance of the story, but sees it as powerfully setting forth the love of God for sinners, the mainspring of the Gospel.

Some background to the 'rights' of sons.

Read Deuteronomy 21:15-21.

Further info: *"The rules for disposing of property are given in the Mishnah (Ancient Jewish rule book). If a man decided to make gifts, he normally gave the capital but retained the income. He could then no longer dispose of the capital, only of his interest in the income. But the recipient could get nothing until the death of the giver. He could sell the capital if he chose, but the buyer couldn't gain possession until the death of the donor. We see this in the elder brother. The father clearly retained the managership of the property and the use of the proceeds. But he can say, 'All mine is yours' (Luke 15:31). What is unusual about the younger son's request is that he sought the use of the capital immediately. This could be given, and it was given in this case. But it was far from common."* **(Leon Morris – Tyndale Commentary)**

(i) What's common to this story with the first two?

(ii) Sceptics might say that it's because the son has reached 'rock bottom' that he returns home and 'repents'. Others say, it's taken the experience of having nothing that triggers a wake-up-call, and leads to true repentance. What do you say, and why?

(iii) Were the actions of the father in celebrating the son's return premature? How have you found yourself responding to someone when they 'have become a Christian'? Are you excited for yourself/excited for them/sceptical/encouraged in yourself/encouraging towards them/dismissive/alooof/thankful in prayer/feel awkward/indifferent?



Discuss your answers with members of your Growth Group.

e) What do you think about the reaction of the older son? Does he have a point, or has he missed the point? Tease this out with your group.

Wrapping up....

These three parables were told by Jesus in response to the Pharisees and the teachers of the law at the beginning of the chapter. What do you think is the key or central point that Jesus is making in telling these three parables? For example: Is it about not ignoring the 'lost'? Is it about repentance? Is it about forgiveness, love and acceptance?

If a 'bikey gang' were to pull up into the MPC carpark next Sunday and came into our church meeting, ...or if a unwashed smelly 'street person' sat down beside you next Sunday, in what way would these words of Jesus be of help to you?