

## **Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective: iShare–Intentionally**

**Luke 15:1, 2, 8-10**

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*March 11, 2012 – Morning Sermon*

We are in Luke 15. I am just going to begin by reading the first two verses and then we'll look at verses 8 through 10 with some focus in this study. This is the Word of God. It's the truth. Luke 15:1-2 says [1] Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. [2] And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

One of the great joys we have in the declaration of God's Word is to focus as a congregation each year. That's what we have done this year. We have focused on personal evangelism. Why have we done iShare? We have done iShare because we believe one of the great privileges we have been given in the Gospel ministry is to share the Gospel with others even as it has been shared with us.

I want to remind you of the verse that has guided us from I Thessalonians 2:8 which says [8] *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.* In other words, God's people share themselves and they share the Gospel. There are Gospel deeds and Gospel words. Both of them are necessary and helpful. In fact, they way you and I live for Christ either opens the door to share the Gospel or closes the door but the way we live and what we're doing is not enough that we share the Gospel also.

St. Francis of Assisi made a comment in which I understand the motivation behind it and I applaud it. He said, "Preach the Gospel and if necessary use words." He is talking about how your life speaks volumes about Christ but while that is a marvelous intent, actually the content is not accurate. I want to shift it just a little bit. Preach the Gospel and use words because they're necessary. People are saved by faith in Christ. How do you believe in Christ? Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ so we share ourselves and we share the Gospel – the life of the Gospel and the words of the Gospel. We not only want to share the Gospel here but around the world.

What does it mean that we're missionaries here and we're sharing the Gospel here? I want to remind you of the two axioms that have guided us in this iShare focus that all of us will be committed to being those who share the Gospel personally. Here are the two axioms. The first one is no one will or can come to Christ for salvation apart from God's sovereign, searching, saving and sufficient grace bringing them from sin's death to life. Why will no one come to Christ apart from God's sovereign, searching, saving and sufficient grace? The reason is we're born dead in our sins. The Bible says there are none who seek Him, no not one. Today God may have drawn you here near to Him.

You may want to know about how to be saved and this church can't save you. Baptism can't save you but there is a Savior. This text says you're helpless but I have great news and that is you're not hopeless. There is a Savior who has come for you who would not come to Him. Now He is ready to receive you. No one will or can come to Him and it doesn't matter where you are. Jesus saves religious terrorists like Paul. Paul killed Christians and look at what Jesus did. Jesus saves murderers and adulterers like David. Jesus saves man killers like Moses. He saves cowards like Elijah. He saves traitors like Peter. Jesus is a friend to sinners and saves sinners.

That brings me to the second axiom which is God's sovereign, searching, saving and sufficient grace comes to people through people. Those whom He has saved become are those whom He uses to reach others. In fact, if you came to Jesus Christ today and put your trust in Him as your sufficient Savior, it is because God came for you through people. Somebody sowed the Gospel. Somebody watered the Gospel. I have had the marvelous privilege to pray with a number of people who have committed their life to Christ. No person that I have ever prayed with at the moment they committed their life to Jesus was I the first one to talk to them about it. Somebody else had prayed for them. Somebody else had talked to them. Somebody else had shared the Gospel with them.

So we realize that no one will or can come apart from God's grace. We're saved by grace through Christ, that sovereign, sufficient, searching grace of the Lord. And God searches people out through His people so let's take a look at a moment like that from Luke 15. I love Luke 15. It's one of my favorite passages of Scripture because this text comes into context. It has three parables in it. There is the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. Why did Jesus teach these three parables and Luke inspired by the Holy Spirit put them in Scripture for us? It was because of the occasion. The occasion was the Pharisees and the Scribes had brought a charge against Jesus.

Let's look back at Luke 15. What is a tax gatherer? There were not any more despised than the tax gatherers in Israel back then. A tax gatherer was a Jew who had gone to work for Rome to collect the taxes from the Jewish people to give to the oppressors, Rome. They were not only seen as traitors by the Jewish citizens of those days but they were also seen as thieves because Rome didn't pay them

to do that. How did they get paid? They stole. They collected too much and that's the way they padded their account. They were not only tax gatherers but they were sinners, disobedient to God. The Pharisees are saying "Look, they're drawing near to Jesus and not only that Jesus receives them and eats with them! He has table fellowship with them. What kind of Savior is that?"

Let me explain what kind of Savior that is. That is Jesus, a friend of sinners. Do you know why the sinners and the tax gatherers drew near to Him? It is because He went after them. He went looking for them. They bring this charge and He receives and eats with sinners. Jesus answers the charge "Guilty. Not only do I draw near to sinners but I go after them. That's why I was sent. I was sent to seek and to save the lost." I love the way Jesus answers the charge. Luke 15:2-3 says [2] *And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."* [3] *So he told them this parable.* Jesus responds "so" and not only did He come from heaven to seek and to save sinners but I have something else to share with you. Jesus said "Every time one of them repents of their sins and trusts Me for salvation there's a party in heaven. There is joy in heaven." So He decides to teach them with three parables – the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.

I just want to look at one of them in this study. Those of you who know Christ already this passage will resonate because you know this is what happened to you. Luke 15:8-10 says [8] "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? [9] And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' [10] Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Who is the woman? It is really interesting to read the commentators. In the lost sheep the shepherd goes after them. In the lost son you have the Father who rejoices when the son comes back home so a lot of commentators see the woman as the Holy Spirit. In other words, they see the three parables proclaiming the Trinity where the shepherd is Jesus, the father is the Father and the woman is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. For me that's a little bit too much speculation but I will tell you what I do think. First of all I thank the Lord that He chose a woman for this parable. I just love how Jesus diversifies His teaching. A shepherd would have been a poor man and they were the off scouring of the culture. In the lost son there is a father who is rich. So there is a poor shepherd, a rich man and a woman who is very likely a widow. The Lord is saying that He saves anybody and everybody and those He saves, He uses anybody and everybody to seek and to save the lost.

So He uses this woman who has ten coins. Ten drachmas would have been the equivalent of one day's wage. She loses one of them. How do you see the woman? Not only does God save men, women, old, young, rich, poor, black and

white but anybody and everybody. God saves sinners. Also God uses anybody He saves but I think the woman is carefully chosen to point us to the work of the Holy Spirit through His church – the bride of Christ, us and she is the very picture of the bride of Christ who is on the search for sinners, empowered by the Holy Spirit. I like the way one Baptist pastor said it in very plain language. We are the hound of heaven. God has us here to track them down and bring them to Jesus. That is what the woman begins to picture.

I want to say five things about the woman. The first thing is the woman clearly values the coin. She has nine coins and lost one. It is one tenth of everything that she has and notice she definitely values that coin. Because she values it the second thing you'll notice is she searches for the coin. Thirdly, she keeps searching until she finds it. She searches diligently, intentionally and with intensity. She starts to look for the coin and doesn't find it. So she quits, no. She lights a lamp. She couldn't find it. It was too dark. She lights a lamp but still hasn't found it. Does she quit? No, she gets the broom.

Would you like to know how many times I heard that growing up? Get the broom. She gets the broom and she is sweeping as she listens for the coin. She looked for it, lit the lamp and was intentional. She didn't find it so she increased her intentionality by sweeping for it. I can see her putting the chairs up on the tables. We swept and the mopped the floors so much when I was growing up because my mom couldn't stand to feel the grit on her feet. I loved what my mom's friend said to her when she said that. Her friend Alma said "Honey then wear some shoes."

This woman is sweeping and she still hasn't found it. She is intentional. She has increased her intentionality in her search because she values that coin and now she goes to another level of intensity. It says she seeks diligently. Let me translate here. She got down on her hands and knees. She is determined to find that lost coin. That lost coin is valuable. The lamp didn't help her find it. Sweeping didn't help her find it. So she got on her hands and knees and began to search diligently for it and she finds it.

That brings me to the fourth observation. When she finds the coin she rejoices. That takes us to the fifth thing. She not only rejoices over finding the coin but fifthly she gathers her neighbors to rejoice with her. She says "Come here and let's throw a party. I found the coin!" You can almost see that coin being examined for when she found it she rejoiced. Then she called her neighbors and friends and they got together to rejoice with her.

I want to give you some life takeaways from this parable for our iShare series. The first one is a lost coin stays lost until it is found. A lost coin can't find itself. A lost coin doesn't just jump up and run back to its owner. I know we might say "It will turn up." No, it won't turn up until you run by it. So, lost sinners have to be found. Praise the Lord that Jesus is still seeking and searching lost sinners

through His people. Jesus said “As the Father sent Me (to seek and to save the lost), I now empower you with the Holy Spirit and so I send you.” Lost sinners are helpless but they’re not hopeless. They won’t seek the Lord. They can’t find themselves.

If people could save themselves God would not have sent His Son to the cross. He would have just sent a message. “Here’s how you can find Me.” We are born dead in our sins. I have a Savior who goes to the cross, goes to the graveyard and dies for sinners. He pays the penalty and uproots the graveyard. He brings dead sinners to life. I’m helpless but I’m not hopeless. I have a sure Hope, a blessed Hope, a forever Hope and that Hope is not the church, not the preacher, not myself but it is the Savior who came and found me. That is my Hope. In Him alone I find my joy, my hope and my life. Christ did not invite us to an afterlife. Christ invited us to Himself and He is our life. I am helpless but I’m not hopeless. I have Good News. I may not be seeking for Christ but Christ is seeking for me and this Savior who died and rose again has now sent His people empowered by the Spirit. So I have more news. His people are out looking and drawing near to sinners that they might come to Christ, that they might know Him, love Him and follow Him.

You might be saying “When will this vain babbler quit?” The only people that will really be interested in what I’m saying right now are the people that God is awakening to come to Christ and the people who know they were lost and have been found. Cultural Christians who think Jesus is the hand maiden for their culture, nominal Christians who are those who grew up in a Christian home and go to church, Pharisees who are self righteous religionists all think this doesn’t make any sense. Those who were lost and then found this grabs their heart because they didn’t find Him. He found them. I came to Him because He came after me. I have a Savior. God didn’t send His Son to coach me. God sent His Son to save me from my sins, deliver me from its penalty and to give me everlasting life.

In this passage where it says Jesus receives and eats with sinners you can almost hear the sneer of the Pharisees when they say “siiiinnnnneers.” There are some translations that put the word sinners in quotes to try and draw attention to the Pharisaical view of these people. I don’t put quotes around sinners because I think the Pharisees were right. Jesus draws near to sinners. The problem with the Pharisees was not that they called those people sinners, it was that they didn’t see themselves as sinners. A self righteous religionist never has time to look for sinners but when you know that Jesus found you and saved you this resonates in your heart. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I was lost but now I’m found. I was blind but now I see. I didn’t save myself. I have a Savior who won’t let me go because He came for me.

The second takeaway is seeking the lost coin consumed the woman. She clearly valued it. Look at her intentionality, her intensity and her increasing intentionality

and intensity. She lights a lamp. She sweeps. She gets on her hands and knees. She seeks diligently for it. You can just see this absolutely consuming the woman. Seeking lost sinners consumes God's people, His church. We will do it intentionally. We will do it with increasing intentionality. We'll do it with intensity. We'll light the lamp of the Gospel and shine the light into the darkness that people will come to Christ. We will go to every crook and corner and sweep it with intercessory prayer.

Ask God to give you five people to pray for that you know don't know Jesus Christ and go to them having prayed for them. Put them in the incubator of prayer because they can't be saved without God's intervening work by His Holy Spirit. God has you there for a reason. Bathe them with prayer. God, would You work through me? Would You work in them? Would You give them eyes to see and ears to hear? So light the lamp of the Gospel and share Christ. Also sweep with intercessory prayer. There is nothing beneath us. We will get on our hands and knees to go find people for Jesus Christ. There is nothing we will not do with servant's hearts, humbling ourselves. We'll go anywhere, to everyone for everyone to be brought to Christ. The Good News is seeking lost sinners will consume the lost sinners who have been saved and they will go.

The third takeaway is the woman, her friends and neighbors gathered when the coin was found. So do God's people. God's people delight to come together. The helpless have found the hope of Christ. The light of Gospel has gone and it has been swept with prayer. We have gone on our hands and knees and people have come to Christ. For every single one that comes to Christ we join the angels in heaven to give glory to God through His Son who has saved them and rejoicing that we had the privilege to be a part of it, all the while remembering that we were lost sinners who have been saved.

This is no guilt trip but if you weren't at our service last Sunday night I ache for you because you missed something. First of all it was the Lord's Supper so our Savior met with His people at a Table. Who came to the Lord's Supper? Sinners saved by grace came to the Lord's Supper. We drew near to the Lord. A young lady shared how God brought her all the way to China and from China to here and brought people from this church to her and she came to Christ. I wish she could have been here because we were just rejoicing. I know we're Presbyterians but we couldn't help ourselves. We began to applaud. We started rejoicing. It wasn't that there were 30 who came to know the Lord but just one. That's all it takes. Lord, just one that has been rescued and come to Christ. It thrills the heart and joy of God's people.

When we assemble we assemble vertically and primarily to worship God in Spirit and in truth. Another reason we assemble is to see all the men and women who have come to saving faith in Jesus Christ and every time another one comes we join the angels in rejoicing before the Lord. Great things He has done and great is our joy as He brings people to Himself.

Have you noticed in the last couple of weeks this series of well known celebrities that have died unexpectedly? There was Whitney Houston, Gary Carter and I could just go on. There were so many recently that the radio station called me to interview me about it and said "What is your response to this?" My first response was man does not know his time. We are not guaranteed the next moment. The second thing was I was reminded that God's Word is true. God's Word says it is appointed unto man once to die (and if you're not alive when Jesus comes back it will be true for you) and then the judgment. That's just as true. Death – no recycling, no re-incarnation, once to die and then the judgment. You and I have been entrusted with the only message that can deliver people from that judgment on that Day.

The Good News is we're not bringing you a religion for you to do better to get to heaven. We're bringing you a Savior who takes you right where you are and He'll never leave you where you are but will change you and grow you in grace and bring you to heaven. This One who found you says "I lose not one." Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, I thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word this day. I know that even as I'm sharing this Good News that's couched in the bad news with the bad news being that we need a Savior and we can't save ourselves. Our church can't save us nor our friends but the Good News is we have a glorious, gracious God who sent His Son that we might be saved. There are lost and there are found. Anyone reading this who hasn't made a commitment to Christ would You enable them to say, "Jesus I am lost but today the lamp was lit, the sweeping ministry of the Holy Spirit found me. I now come to Christ who came for me. I put my trust in You alone." If you prayed that prayer, please contact us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. We'd love to pray with you for this is the day of forever life in Christ. He who believes in Me has eternal life. Father, I know there are a vast number of people who have already come to Christ, would You this day give us the joy and banish all the self righteousness that so easy comes into our life. Remind us that we were lost and couldn't save ourselves but we've been found so would You give us not only joy in our Savior but rejoicing every time someone comes to Christ and embracing the privilege to be those through whom You find sinners. Jesus You're a friend for sinners. We will go befriend sinners in Your Name, sharing ourselves and the Gospel. We'll light the lamp of the Gospel, we'll pray, we'll sweep every corner of the house and we'll start with our children and our neighborhood. We'll go to share Christ to those who are lost. We will seek them who do not seek the Savior that the Savior will bring them to life. Father, for those who are going to share Christ with someone this week would You give them the ability to speak the truth in love with respect, compassion and boldness. Go before them so that to whom they speak to will have eyes to see and ears to hear and would flee to Christ, the Lord and Savior of sinners. Jesus, thank You. You came to seek and to save the lost. You found us and through us

we seek others to save and we will rejoice with the angels of heaven every time one comes to Christ, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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