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Sermons
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LUKE 15:1-10 "LOST"

In 2004 creators, Lieber, Abrams, and Lindelof launched the Science Fiction TV series sensation "Lost" which went on to captivate audiences for six full seasons. The premise of the show was that a commercial flight, 815 from Sydney to LA, suddenly crashes on a mysterious island somewhere in the South-Pacific and the diverse group of strangers must work together to survive. The characters are from all over the world, most of them are strangers to each other, and they have their own unique past. But for all their differences, they have much in common. They are all lost! They are lost on the island; they all are broken people with a burdened and troubled past; they are separated from loved ones; and they all want to survive. Some of them want to just stay on the island to avoid their past and others desperately want to get back. The show is full of character flash backs that flesh out each person's past and connect them to the present situation of being lost on the island.

From the very beginning to the end, "Lost" is Jack centric, that is the main story focuses upon Jack Shepherd, an extraordinary spinal surgeon, compassionate healer, and reluctant leader. In a matter of moments Jack becomes the shepherd of all the lost people on the island. Jack tends and heals their wounds. Jack leads and directs the others to get food, water, and shelter. Jack often seeks after survivors who become lost on the island and he saves many of them from injuries, sicknesses, and enemies. Jack lives up to his last name, Shepherd.

But Jack is not without his own problems and flaws; he has deep seeded guilt and pain which he seeks to forget by trying to save everyone else. Most of Jack's pain stems from his alienation from his father Christian. Jack is a broken and lost shepherd trying to shepherd a broken and lost people.

"Lost," like all good science fiction reflects the grave, messy, painful, broken, and lost world we live in and people that we are; it takes the present day struggles, trials, challenges, issues, hopes, and dreams common to people today and explores them in a fictional context. Our society is full of broken and lost people. Each one of us has suffered pain, loss, tragedy, shame, regret, and disappointment. Each one of us seeks to belong and to have meaning and purpose in our lives. Each one of us has suffered alienation from other people and most certainly we have all been alienated from God. We are lost, our society is lost, all creation is lost because sin has separated us from God and from each other. "Lost" you might say is a modern day parable for our world.

But our Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and save the lost. God sent Jesus into the world to be a Shepherd to the lost; to seek and find them, to heal them, and to feed them. Jesus came to bring sinners to repentance and restore them to God from whom

they have been alienated. But unlike Jack Shepherd, from “Lost” Jesus does not carry His own burdens, pain, flaws, and guilt. Rather, Jesus is the faithful Shepherd who has carried all our burdens. All of Scripture bears witness to this Good News of Jesus Christ and thus is Christocentric.

In our text today, Jesus makes use of two stories or parables, to call those who are lost to repentance and communicate the Good News of God’s reign come in Him. Jesus told these parables in the course of His earthly ministry to seek and save those who are lost, when He was on His way to Jerusalem to suffer, die, and be raised. The text indicates that Jesus spoke these parables especially for the sake of Pharisees and Scribes who had by in large rejected God’s call for them to repent through both John the Baptist and Jesus. 1 And all the tax collectors and sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. 2 But the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble saying that, “He receives sinners and eats with them.”

The Pharisees and Scribes refused to be baptized by John; they didn’t think they had a need to be forgiven and reconciled to God. They assumed that they were just fine with God and that others should follow their own example. They didn’t want to humble themselves and admit that in fact they had been unfaithful shepherds of the people. And they found it perplexing and quite vexing that Jesus, who claimed to be from God, continued to surround Himself with sinners and eat with them instead of separating Himself from them as they did.

3 And He spoke to them this parable saying, 4 “What man from you having one hundred sheep and because one of them is lost will he leave the ninety nine in the wilderness and journey for the lost one until He finds it? 5 And upon finding it he lays it upon his shoulders rejoicing 6 and going into the house he calls his friends and neighbors saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I found my lost sheep.’ 7 I say to you that in this way there will joy in heaven for one sinner who repents more than ninety nine being righteous who don’t have a need to repent.

8 Or what woman having ten coins if she loses one coin, does she not light the lamp and sweep the house and seek carefully until when she finds it? 9 And when she finds it she calls her friends and neighbors saying, ‘Rejoice with me, because I found the coin which was lost.’ 10 In this way I say to you, there will be joy before the angles of God for one sinner who repents.”

In both parables of Jesus something is lost, someone goes and seeks that which is lost, and upon finding the lost thing the community of friends and family are summoned to rejoice and feast that the lost was found. Jesus makes it clear that the lost in each parable, be it the sheep or the coin, that is found represents those who are alienated from God because of sin; they are those who have wandered away and fallen into the traps and snares of the evil one, those who are sick, weak, and broken. The shepherd and owner searches for the lost/sinners and restores them; the lost do not find and restore themselves. Jesus is the Shepherd, the Owner, who seeks out lost sinners and bears them upon His shoulders. The summoning of friends and family is the present and eternal rejoicing and feasting in God’s heavenly presence as His kingly reign comes to us and saves yet another sinner.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost, all those alienated from God because of sin. Jesus came for lost Gentiles, like you and me; He came for lost Jews, like tax collectors and gross sinners, the sick, weak, lame, and blind; and He came even for lost

Pharisees and Scribes who thought they were not lost. Jesus sought to break the hardness of heart of the Pharisees and Scribes who continued to object to His ministry of receiving sinners and eating with them; Jesus sought to call them to repentance. The Pharisees and Scribes show up in the first parable of the sheep; they are the so called “ninety nine righteous” who tongue in cheek don’t need to repent. In the parable there is no joy, feasting, and celebration for them. The joy, the communal feasting is for the one sinner who repents!

The meaning of these parables, especially the first one with the sheep were not lost on the Pharisees and Scribes. After all we must remember that they were very intimate with the Old Testament Scriptures. They knew of well the words of Ezekiel 34. Jesus wanted the Pharisees and Scribes to have Ezekiel 34 in mind as He told His parables, because Ezekiel 34 had a word of Law against them and a word of Gospel to them. In verses 1-10 God charges and condemns the shepherds or leaders of Israel for not feeding the people of God, for not healing and caring for them, for not seeking out the lost, but instead caring only for themselves. But in verses 11-24 which were read earlier, God promises that He, Himself will seek after His lost sheep, heal them, and restore them and that His servant David, the Christ will come and be Shepherd over them.

12 “For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. 12 As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 23 And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. 24 And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the Lord; I have spoken.

The Pharisees and Scribes were refusing Jesus call to all sinners to repent and they tried to prevent other sinners from following after Jesus and eating with Him. Even though their anger against Jesus grew to the point where they plotted to kill Him, Jesus lovingly continued to call them to repentance. Christ Jesus, God’s appointed Shepherd laid down His life down on the cross for the Pharisees and Scribes, for the lost, for sinners, even for you. Jesus offered up His body and shed His blood as a sacrifice for our sins!

Jesus mercy and grace toward all sinners, even the Scribes and Pharisees, is witnessed to in 1 Timothy 1:12-17, where St. Paul, a former Pharisee, boasts in the mercy and grace of God to seek and save sinners. *12 I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, 13 though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, 14 and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. 15 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for*

eternal life. 17 To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Before His death and resurrection, Jesus sought out and saved sinners as He healed their sicknesses and diseases, as He cast out demons and gave life to the dead, and as He received sinners and ate with them. Today, after His death and resurrection Jesus continues to seek and save lost sinners through Word and Sacrament. Jesus has sent out pastors, His under-shepherds to Baptize sinners from all the nations, to preach His Word and call to repentance every sinner, and to invite the baptized to come to the feast of Holy Communion where Jesus serves us His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. There in Baptism, in the Word, in the Lord's Supper, Jesus is present by His Word and by the Holy Spirit to seek, restore, heal, and feed lost sinners!

So who are you? Are you one of the ninety nine so called righteous persons who don't need to repent, who thinks he is just fine but finds fault in others just like the Scribes and Pharisees? Or are you lost, a sinner, one who is broken, sick and weak, and hungry?

For the lost, for sinners, there is Good News. Jesus died to seek and save you; His Word, His body, and blood are for you! Jesus is your faithful Shepherd who lives and is preparing green pastures and the water of life for you in the resurrection! Jesus shall heal all your wounds and you shall live with all the other lost ones found in eternal joy and feasting!

Interestingly many Christian themes pervade the episodes of "Lost" and even the solution to the "lostness" of the characters of "Lost" has a strong parallel to the solution that God has given to our "lostness" in the real world as a result of sin. It is amazing that a group of non-Christian creators would put forth the bloody sacrifice of a man to heal and reconcile the characters, as God reconciled the world and us to Himself through the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood on the cross. Christ Jesus died and rose to seek and save the lost! Amen.