

The Lost Really Are Lost

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The purpose for which Jesus came into the world succinctly is stated in Luke 19:10, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Why does the title read, “The lost really are lost”? The answer is because there should be more concern for the lost. It begins in the realization that to be lost is the worst thing that could ever happen to any person. His condition is described by the apostle Paul, “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). And, no one could describe it better than the Lord Himself in these excerpts from His discussion about the kingdom of heaven, “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ...Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. ...And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:30, 41, 46).

Perhaps it would help encourage us all to do our part more consistently in reaching out to the lost if we could identify with their situation a little more closely. In order to help with that, let's consider our Lord's discussion about it in Luke's gospel. In the Lord's defense before the Pharisees and scribes for associating with publicans and sinners for the purpose of saving them, he told of the plight of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost boys in Luke 15. It may be that the lost sheep shows the *vulnerability* of the lost even as a defenseless lost sheep is subject to perils. It may also be that the lost coin shows the *value* of the lost, warranting the earnest effort of the owner to find the silver piece. And, it may be that the lost boys show that the lost are *victims* of their own sinful desires. Specifically regarding the lost sheep Jesus asked, “What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Luke 15:4-7). Have you ever noticed the careful specificity with which Jesus pointed out the will of God regarding the concern he has that not a single individual should be lost? Hear him in the parallel text to Luke 15, “Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14). The lost are *vulnerable*, the lost have *value*, and the lost are *victims* of their own sinful desires and actions.

Since the church of Christ is the refuge of the saved (Acts 2:47) purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28), all we can do to promote it will assist the lost in being saved. Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:23, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body.” We can study what the Bible says about the church; we can attend all the services of the church; we can invite our family, friends, and associates to visit with us at the services of the church; we can talk about the church at every opportunity that opens up to us; we can behave in such a way to validate the truth that salvation is in the church

and thereby encourage others to want to become members of the church; we can support the church financially with our first day of the week contributions; we can edify the members of the church to keep them encouraged about its great significance to the lost as well as to the saved; we can defend the Bible teaching regarding the church when it is challenged; we can ceaselessly thank God for the church; and we can reverently pray without ceasing for the church and its success in God's divine plan for the lost.