

Back to Church Series – Part 1

September 17, 2016

Introduction

What time is it? How often do you ask that question every day? Our lives are driven by time—time for work, school, practice, appointments, deadlines, bed . . . the list goes on and on. In fact, time is so important in our culture that most of us have multiple tech devices all linked by the same satellites to tell us exactly what time it is 24-7, no matter where we go.

It's hard to believe that less than 150 years ago, standardized time zones didn't even exist. In fact, every town set their clocks by the solar noon—which means it was a slightly different time in every town. This worked until people became more connected over longer distances. When railroad travel increased, schedules were impossible to coordinate and people kept missing their trains! In 1883, four standard time zones were set in the United States to help solve the time dilemma. A year later, global time zones were adopted. And today we can't imagine life in a world that isn't ruled by time.

Even more importantly, the Bible tells us that God's relationship to time is different from our own. (Expand on this.)

Our theme for this morning's message (and for the next two weeks) is "*Now is the time.*" We're going to consider this theme from Luke chapter 15 which is on page 740 in the pew Bibles.

Luke 15:1-24 (NIV)

1 Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

What is happening here?

1. Context

a. Look at your Bible for a moment.

- i. I assume your Bible breaks up Luke 15 into three sections, correct?
- ii. If you don't already know this, here's a lesson for you.

1. Those sections are included for *convenience*...they were not part of Scripture as it was written in the original language (which was koine Greek for the NT).

2. While the section break downs can be convenient, so times they can get in the way of understanding a context. Luke 15 is one place where that can happen.
- b. Jesus told three stories here and they are not stand alone stories; they are intentionally connected to make one point – God is in the business of finding lost people.

2. The stories

- a. The "wrong kind of people" were gathering to hear Jesus teach.
- b. Those who believed they were the "right kind of people," had an issue with Jesus welcoming the "wrong kind of people."
- c. Jesus told three stories so that both groups could hear them.
 - i. These stories share three common threads – lost, found, and rejoicing.
 - ii. In the first story, a sheep was lost.
 1. It was valuable to the owner.
 2. It was found.
 3. There was rejoicing.
 - iii. In the second story, a coin was lost.
 1. It was valuable to the owner.
 2. It was found.
 3. There was rejoicing.

- iv. In the third story, a son was lost.
 - 1. He was valuable to his family.
 - 2. He was “found.”
 - 3. There was rejoicing.

- d. The sheep and the coin are symbolic of people.
 - i. How do I know this?
 - ii. I know it because this entire section begins with one group of people mumbling and grumbling about another group of people.

- e. The stories illustrate three ways people can become lost.
 - i. The sheep might represent someone who simply wanders off because he is distracted when something else catches his attention.
 - ii. The coin might represent someone who is lost because of the actions of another person – she was mistreated or mishandled in some way.
 - iii. The son represents someone who is lost because he chose to walk away from where he should have been.

So what? Why should I pay attention to this?

You and I should pay particular attention to these stories because the point Jesus was making is that people are lost...and they loved enough and important enough to be searched for until they are found...no matter why they are lost.

That’s how God views every single person!

Now what? What should I do?

This morning, I want you to answer two questions for me. The first question is this, “Am I lost?”

What do I mean by that?

Spiritually speaking, we are lost when we are not in right relationship with God.

Share the gospel – sick with a disease and there’s only one cure.

The second question I want you to answer is this, “Do I want to be found?” Explain how that happens.

Then what? What can I expect if I do this?

You can expect a celebration over you!