

GOD' S LOVE FOR THOSE LOST IN SIN.

The nation's elite challenges people daily to be politically correct. They want us to go along with their worldly thinking vrs. God's direction. In my last Letter to Editors I put it this way: "sacred vrs. secular, natural vrs. unnatural, normal vrs. abnormal, sacrificial love vrs. lust, quality of life vrs. random equality, morality vrs. immorality, facts vrs. fiction, and rights vrs wrong."

All this has given us the Pierre Eliot Truedau Charter of Rights and Freedoms, where individuals and groups have been given the right to do wrong and the freedom to get away with it.

I have a hard time accepting this nonsense. I am a politically incorrect person. But I don't feel bad about it, for when we read the Gospel account of the life of Jesus, He firmly held His own in terms of what the religious establishment required. The will of God stood perfectly in the center of all His thoughts, words, and actions.

Have you noticed how the pharisees and teachers of the law gave Jesus a hard time with their brand of religious correctness? And so here in this 15th chapter of Luke we read that they "muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them'". This nobody should do and surely not a man such as Jesus!

But Christ had a purpose for doing that: He had in mind their eternal salvation! He sought to establish a special kind of contact with them. He desired to rescue them from the sin-pattern of life that enslaved them. The devil had a strong grip on them and Jesus was finding ways and means to crush that hold of the devil over them. He desired them to no longer be bound and lost, but free and saved.

That is why Jesus told the phar. and teachers of the law these 3 par. we find here in Luke 15. The one is about a shepherd who lost 1 of his 100 sheep and who left the 99 behind to search for the 1 who had strayed away.

The next is that of a women who lost ^{+ found her} 10 silver coins, which in our money today is about \$700-\$800.

And the third par. is about a younger son who was no longer satisfied with the tedious and boring work at home; he wanted to be free and experience the excitement of the big world outside of the homeplace. Only ... to find out that in the long run it wasn't all he had rationalized it to be. This is how he came to realize that he was lost, in sin!

Have you ever lost anything? How did you feel about it? Did you notice how important such lost things all at once become? When we lose a set of keys we turn the whole car, bedroom, or

house for that matter, up side down. And if we don't find them we do the same outside. We try to trace our tracks where we possibly could have been.

We do the same when we lose a shoe, a book, a receipt, a wallet, a bankbook, and so on. We don't say, "Oh, that's okay; I still have the other shoe, receipt, wallet, bankbook, or 99 other books." No way! We look in every nook and cranny until we find what is lost.

About 10 years ago, when we just retired from our Edmonton ministry and moved to Mayerthorpe, we went into a bit of cow-calving business. We also made butter and cheese which we did around 60 years ago living at home in Holland.

One day in the beginning of March the best of our 6 cows was about to have her first calf. I had made a perfect straw bedded place for her to deliver her first born. But no, at night she decided to take off in the muskeg and bush area.

When the light began to dawn our native foster son and I sought to determine whether we could trace her tracks in the fresh snow that had fallen during the night. It was hard going. All we could find were fresh coyote tracks. Our feet were nearly frozen but we were not going to give up until we found her, and hopefully, the calf too before the coyotes did.

It was the native instinct of our son that won the day. He was all out there by himself and so was I, but periodically, he stood still at various places to listen while I kept going. And that made him find both mother and calf. In the morning quiet and with his sharp ear, he had picked up some sound. What a relieve for the hobby farmer-preacher.

And 4 months ago in preparation for a visit to our sons and his family in Lethbridge and a speaking engagement at our Synod meeting in Calgary, I put my checkbook at such a safe place that I am still looking for it.

Now, I suppose all of you have had similar experiences with lost items or animals. We then discover that whatever is lost, all at once becomes more important than ever. This is what Jesus was referring to in terms of lost sheep, coins, and son.

And yes, that happens today too that parents all at once miss their son or daughter, either taken off on their own account to roam the wide open area of the street life, or a little child curiously wandering away from mom and/or dad while shopping or camping.

Do we have to tell such people to immediately begin their search and not stop until they find what is lost? No! The frantic pursuit to find what was lost will commence at once. They will also welcome and solicit the help of anyone else.

No parent will say, "Well, it's too bad", or "that's okay; we still have 3 other children left (or as in our case, 7." And the same with grandchildren. God has blessed us with already with 25 of them. However, if my wife and I would be shopping

with one of our children and grandchildren in the Edmonton Mall (which by the way, I hate doing) and 1 of the grandchildren would get lost there, we sure would not say, "Well, we still have 24 left." We would be looking just as hard as the parents themselves would.

And the same with the shepherd, beef farmer, or when you would loose \$700-800.

Friends, this is the picture Jesus wants you to get about the parables of the "lost" which He told the disciples in response to the attitude of the pharisees and the teachers of the law.

In fact, I am not even saying this altogether correct. These parables are far more than a story about a lost sheep, 10 lost silver coins, and 1 dissatisfied younger son. All represent people lost in sin, in danger of being torn apart by the devil, and unless found quickly, being on their way to hell.

And even now I have not given you the full meaning of the parable. For Jesus wants you to know that this is not just how people feel about the situation of lostness, temporarily or eternally. This is how God Himself feels and looks upon people lost in sin, outside of the Kingdom of God, separated from the Gospel of Jesus Christ and on there way to hell, unless rescued from the devil's claws and devastating purposes.

Lost means all that, plus much more. "Lost" includes living an unrepentant life, be an unforgiven sinner, be a prey to influences of demons, slaves of unrighteousness, have the door of heaven closed in this state at the end of one's life here below, and face judgement without the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world!

Yes, the bible makes it abundantly clear for anyone who cares to listen that there not only is a glorious heaven when this life here concludes, but for the lost there is a frightening eternal hell around the corner.

This is where "lost" in these parables stand for. And this is how God Himself, our Father in heaven feels about such people and looks upon their lostness.

No, my friends, this is not just how it stands in the minds and hearts of a number of evangelists, preachers, missionaries, teachers, church members and leaders. This is how God's heart yearns with compassion for the lost, everywhere, here and around the world. God has a passion for souls. God does not want anyone to end up in hell.

If it wasn't so, He would not have had His only begotten Son die this atoning death on the cross, and sealing the blood sacrifice by Christ's resurrection on the third day.

Now, since biblically all stands this way with God our heavenly Father, what are you and I doing about it? Is there anything

you and I can do? Is there a way we can be involved in this search for the lost? This rescue mission arranged for by God?

Yes, there is. We can do lots about it. In fact, we should, too. For this is why Jesus told these parables. God has assigned christians a great task. If it was exclusively a matter between God and lost sinners Jesus would not have told these parables.

Neither would these parables have been brought to the attention of the Gospel writers, written down by them, and in spite of many efforts and attacks to stamp out the holy scriptures, God preserving them throughout the centuries for the world's benefit.

The first thing therefore for you and I to do about these parables is to take them to heart. They are not just stories about some unfortunate mishaps in the lives of certain people, and how in the end it luckily all turned out okay.

If this would be the bottom line, we would not read at the end of each parable words such as these:

- a. vrs. 7
- b. vrs 10
- c. vrs. 32

Now this means that if there are people here who don't know whether they are born from above and thereby found, and on their way to heaven, to make sure this morning that you are determined to have God find you. TALK AND PRAY ABOUT IT WITH SOMEONE. I WILL BE EAGER TO HELP YOU AS WELL.

Although it is God who in various ways is all out searching for people lost in sin, He doesn't do it all by Himself. It is clear that He wants you and I, the church of Jesus Christ, be involved too.

This should stand to reason, right? Since God has and is sparing no effort to find people lost to Him, the Kingdom of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the work, witness, and worship of the church, and heaven itself, God is bidding you and I to join Him.

There are a multitude of ways and means whereby God wants you and I to be involved in looking for the lost and the finding of them. Can you mention some of them?

- a. How about being none judgemental to sinners and like Jesus welcoming and eating with them?
- b. How about supporting a summer VBS with your time, talents and offerings?
- c. What about regularly praying for the lost, urgently and fervently? Would that be something for you?
- d. What about winning the trust of none church people and inviting them to your group fellowship, worship service or other church activity?
- e. How about a period of fasting to find and win the lost?
- f. What about training yourself in winsomeness making you ready for discipling?
- g. How about a good dose of lifestyle evangelism, living an

exemplary life?

- h. Than there are all the Sunday preaching services, some of them by way of radio and T.V., even as some weekday Gospel programs. God has them given to us to find the lost, *look for.*
- i. And further, why do bible churches dispatch missionaries throughout the world? Is it not to reach the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

Oh friends, there are scores of ways and means about searching for the Gospel's lost ones throughout our communities, provinces and territories, nation and world. And God wants all christians to be part of this search for heaven's lost ones. There are billions of them.

God notes every lost sinner and has provided the way of salvation for them. God never thinks, "Well, I have already quite a number, 144,000. One more or less doesn't matter. Every lost sinner is eternally important.

It just is not so that one world religion is as good as the other, or that at the end of life all will be saved and go to heaven anyway. That is satan's big lie. Don't fall for it.

I am sure you have plenty of lost sinners here in your town and country side as well. And yes, God wants you to be involved in God's search for the lost *here.*

Ordinarily, in mainline churches there is little or no emphasis on searching for the lost with the glorious Gospel of Christ. Oh, there are humanitarian efforts and activities to assist the poor, unfortunate, singles, children from broken homes, etc.

But the graveness of only humanitarianism is that there is a lack of Gospel ingredient: the explanation and teaching of what we in our catechism call sin, salvation and service, or grace, guilt, and gratitude.

This same thing disturbs me when I attend funeral services in these churches. Very often we are to conclude that every dead person automatically enters heaven. I shudder thinking about the false hope that is being planted into thousands of peoples' minds and hearts.

If everyone automatically enters heaven there are no lost people to save; there was no need of Christ to die for the sins of the world; there is no need for a preaching and teaching ministry, sending out missionaries and supporting evangelists to be part of God's directive to search for the lost.

But if humanitarian efforts is all that God requires of the church, why do we read so much about going out to find the lost in sin? Why do we read things such as these:

- a. Luke 19:10. "For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost."
- b. Luke 9:23- 26
- c. John 6:39-40
- d. *What about John 3:16 + v. Great Commission?*

Friends, it is Jesus who said that there are people who are lost in sin. This is not my idea. And God want you and I be involved in the search for the lost, so that they will be saved.

In fact, there is something else the bible also holds very high. And that is WHEN YOU ARE GOD'S HELPER IN SEARCHING AND FINDING THE LOST, GOD AS IT WERE RETURNS THE FAVOR: THE HOLY SPIRIT AIDS AND STRENGTHENS YOU FROM START TO FINISH.

And that is some assistance you and I cannot do without.

I do not know to what extend you have been instrumental in bringing people to Christ, but friends, know this: there is joy in heaven over every single sinner who repents. God bids the angels to throw a party in heaven. And He wants you to share in some of the joy.

This is why Daniel was encouraged to write, "*But at that time* Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." (12:1b - 3)

There are multitudes of millions of people who don't know anything about the Kingdom of God or Heaven, ie., who have never in repentance and faith turned to Christ and thereby experienced the all important birth from above, which is the only way whereby one enters heaven.

If the cross and the blood of Christ is left out of the Gospel there is little or no gospel left. And the same when Christ is left out of the center of parents' lives trying to raise the children. Without Christ being in control of parents' lives, their children face a bleak eternal future. This is what Jesus meant with not being a stumbling block to them.

Why search for those lost in sin? Because in Christ God does. Because those lost are walking in the way of the evil one. God's heart goes out to the lost because their road of life end up in hell. And this is what the Spirit does not want. This is why Jesus told these parables on sheep lost, coins lost, and prodical son taking off from home.

Christ made it clear that if it was not for the shepherd's commitment to search for the sheep strayed from the flock, that lamb would have been minse meet for the wolves. And if it wasn't for the concern and faithfulness of the woman to turn the house up side down to find the lost coins, she would not have found them. Money is important to God. Christians should use money wisely and not carelessly or selfishly.

And as to the prodical son, if he stubbornly had refused to listen to the Holy Spirit's gentle prompting, he would have died as an unrepentant sinner. Like so many people today die as unrepentant sinners. Including here in this town and country side I fear.

So since Jesus told these parables to the phar. and teachers of the law, and God has seen to it that the Gospel writers

would record them for future generations, and also since God has preserved this holy book through all these thousands of years, we all better follow up on Christ's teachings.

I trust you have sensed the urgency of searching and finding the lost. God wants you and I to assist the Holy Spirit doing the work. It is also the way to share in the angels' joy when one, two or ten sinners repent.

Glory to God. Amen.