

Title: TO SAVE SINNERS, LUKE 15:1-10.  
(Chatham, NJ; 09/12/10, AM) [D – Topical]

Theme: Jesus' mission to save sinners constitutes his ministry and the purpose for the existence of the church.

Purpose: To remind the church of her most important mission and encourage everyone to see their friends and neighbors as lost souls who need Christ.

Introduction:

1. These stories illustrate the very mission and ministry of the church.
2. It is good to be reminded of our mission.
3. When we understand it, we will more likely be able to communicate it to others.
4. Stories about lost sheep and lost coins define his work.

I. Establishing Lostness.

A. The prodigal son.

1. A son rejects his father's house, name, and ways.
2. He returns humiliated with his life ruined.
3. The father says he was lost but found, dead but now alive.
4. Lost – not know his way, not know what to do, not know how to go home.

B. Dead in trespasses, Eph. 2:1-3.

1. Paul describes the Ephesians as dead at one time.
2. Death resulted from "walking in trespasses and sins."
3. It was the promised result from disobeying God in Eden.
4. We must admit the truth about our sins before we can be free, Jn. 8:31-34.
5. Only by the grace of God were they made alive.

C. Separated from God.

1. Isaiah 59:2 – sin separates from God.
2. Colossians 1:21 – sin, evil deeds alienate us from God. We become enemies.
3. Reconciliation comes about only by the death of Christ, 22.

II. Establishing God's Love for the Lost

A. Atonement in the OT, Leviticus.

1. Blood sacrifice of animals atoned for sin in the yearly Day of Atonement.
2. The high priest could not enter into the presence of God without blood.
3. God made it possible for people to reconcile to him.

B. He truly desires this.

1. In 2 Samuel 14:14 we read, "But God will not take away life, and he devises means so that the banished one will not remain an outcast."
2. The story is about David's alienation from one of his sons.
3. God wants the wicked to repent, Ez. 18:21-23; he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked.

C. God so loved, John 3:16.

1. He gave his son.
2. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, 1 John 2:2.
3. God loved us in this, 1 John 4:9-10.
4. There is rejoicing in heaven when a sinner repents, Luke 15.

III. Establishing the Church's Role.

- A. The Lord's Supper, Luke 22:20.
  - 1. The cup is the New Covenant in his blood.
  - 2. We keep alive the memory of his deed in the Supper every week.
  - 3. It is a covenant of forgiveness more complete than the Old one since the blood of animals could never fully cleanse us, Hebrews 10:1-4.
  - 4. His blood cleanses us, 1 John 1:7, and we are witnesses to his sacrifice.
  
- B. Being the light of the world, Mt. 5:14-16.
  - 1. Good deeds don't reflect on us; they reflect the love of God demonstrated in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.
  - 2. Let's give our witness.
  - 3. How do we witness to the ministry that brings salvation?
  - 4. Good works (Mt. 5); good words (Col. 4:5-6); good answers (1 Peter 3:15).

Conclusion:

- 1. The world is lost because it has separated from God.
- 2. Rebellion against God has caused the separation.
- 3. God loved us and sent his Son to offer peace and reconciliation.
- 4. The church is a witness to salvation.
- 5. We offer it through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism.
- 6. We live it by our faithfulness to Christ.
- 7. We offer it to you today.