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Onosmil Zlatobor

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THE LORD'S SERMONS

»About the lost sheep«

St. Luke XV, 3-32: Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable:

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants." ' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my

son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

This entire chapter of my evangelist Luke deals with what was lost and the joy at finding it again. The scribes and Pharisees who were present were shown in three parables why I did not look for the healthy, but the sick, not for the good and righteous, but the sinners.

In order to grasp the real meaning of these parables, we must first - as in the case of most texts - give a more detailed explanation of their most important words. Although you have a language and use its words to express your thoughts, I must frankly tell you that of all the words you use there is not one the deep meaning of which you understand. Hence, in addition to being your instructor and interpreter of My Gospel, I must be your language teacher as well.

Here in these three parables - of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son - the following explanations must be given:

Firstly: What does "lost" mean?

Secondly: Why is one so anxious to find again what was lost?

And thirdly: Why does one have such an extraordinary joy in that which is found again, a joy which often is far greater than that in the more valuable and important things still in one's possession?

Behold, these three questions must be discussed before we can proceed with the spiritual explanation and application upon you, all mankind and the entire visible creation; for, when asking about something one must first be clearly aware of the significance of the question and its value, whereby half the answer is already given.

So let us now systematically begin with the first question, namely: What does the word "lost" mean?

Behold, this word signifies the thought that comes to a person who finds that something - be it a person or a thing - which belongs to him and is of value to him is no longer within his reach and cannot be used or enjoyed by him. Lost is everything that has followed another destination, a different direction from the one assigned to it.

Since this meaning can so deeply affect a man's soul-life, this leads to the-second abovementioned question, which is:

Why is one so anxious to find again what was lost?

The answer is this: Because man's peace of mind has been disturbed through this loss and he is anxious to regain his equilibrium. Hence, what was lost has really a spiritual value for its owner which is often by far greater than its material value.

Therefore, man is anxious to regain possession of what was lost, to draw it back into his sphere of action. He will rejoice at finding it because what was missing is now returning to its former place and can once more be used for that purpose which he had deemed best for it.

From this longing arises the zeal to search or to use all available means to regain possession of what was lost, - an activity which is often associated with hardship and effort. Out of this then the third question finds its solution, namely:

Why does one rejoice more at the regaining of what was lost than at what one already possesses?

This is easily explained, since the finding or searching cost effort, and this effort was rewarded by the success of finding.

Since any joy becomes a real joy only when it can be shared with others, these parables mention also this soul-enjoyment. Thus in these three parables, which I chose from different walks of life, the sorrow over having lost something is expressed accordingly in each picture.

First we have the shepherd who searches for a lost sheep. This parable is directed against the accusation that I sought the company of people who, in the eyes of the scribes and Pharisees, were burdened with sin.

What is a shepherd?

Behold, a shepherd is a man who has been entrusted with a certain number of animals which he is expected to lead to good pastures and, if necessary, to protect from all dangers. Thus the shepherd is responsible to his master that none of the animals entrusted to him comes to any harm and that they always have enough to eat, wherefore the shepherd has to pick suitable pastures for them. If I ate with sinners, thereby proving that I preferred the sick to the healthy, who were not in need of a spiritual physician, this parable of the lost sheep was best suited to make My disciples understand the reason for My attitude; for a lost, erring sheep - figuratively speaking - is like a non-converted, spiritually not guided, or sick person.

Just as a lost sheep is exposed to all kinds of accidents, such as becoming the prey of wild beasts or falling down a cliff, which dangers it is often unable to recognize, thus an erring, spiritually sick man, who - seduced by the world - does not know anything of his spiritual destination, is in danger of completely failing his actual destiny as a member of a future eternal kingdom and may only, after long periods of time through great suffering and bitter experiences arrive at the point to which I wanted to lead him on the shortest road.

I said: The shepherd is obliged to lead his sheep to good pastures and so this was also My duty since I had undertaken to lead people away from the dangerous paths, on which they were thoughtlessly walking, back to the true path of life, to their real spiritual destiny.

I used the example of the shepherd, since for the people of those times it was easy to comprehend and came nearest to My calling as the Son of man, since I, the Wisdom that had descended upon earth, sought to bring back to My Father the lost children like the strayed sheep of a shepherd. As the joy of a shepherd is great when after a long search he finds again his lost sheep, the property that had been entrusted to him, thus My joy is great when a soul has been recovered. In order to make this comparison still clearer I chose the second parable about the woman who lost a coin and did all she could to find it again. I knew very well what value the Pharisees and scribes attached to money and, therefore, they could easily understand the eager searching by the woman, since this was taken from their own sphere of thinking. One can worry even over a small coin and search until it is found.

I had still other reasons in mind when I told them first the parable of the lost sheep as a being with a soul, then about the loss of a material thing of supposed value and, finally, about the loss of spiritual dignity in the picture of the prodigal son. With this I wanted to tell them that it is easy to recover losses of the soul, not so easy to recover material losses and most difficult to recover spiritual losses.

In the first case, circumstances and conditions may help to get the erring person away from his wrong views and make him set out once again on the right path. Material losses, however, usually exert such

a great pressure on the soul that it wavers in its faith in Me, even despairs and makes every effort to regain the worldly pleasures. The woman mentioned by Me could have been content with the remaining nine coins, but the lost one was so dear to her heart that she searched every corner to find it.

Of course, in this parable too, I had only the spiritual process in mind, not the material. Therefore, I said in connection with the recovery of the lost coin, when the woman announced her find to all friends and neighbours, that in heaven there will be just as much joy over a sinner who repents, that is, over a soul saved from perdition.

As regards the third parable - the one of the prodigal son - I had drawn My listeners already far enough into the reach of My spiritual conception so that I could give them as the greatest and last example a story that does not deal with a material loss, but with the loss of the spiritual dignity of a man, who - forgetful of his own worth - Becomes a slave to the world and its pleasures, breaks all ties that bind him to home and family, and rushes out into the world, giving full rein to his passions until, exhausted and spiritually defeated and only in the greatest misery he recognizes the depth of the abyss into which he has thrown himself of his own free will.

In the first example, it was a shepherd who saved a sheep from perdition, a creature far beneath him, by taking it back to its flock. In the second case it was a woman who considered herself lucky when she had found again her material possession. In both cases only worldly things were used as examples. But in the third parable there is added to all these losses fatherly love, which has suffered a greater and more valuable loss. This parable was best applicable to Me, the Father of all created beings, for it illustrates the repentance of a lost soul on the one hand and a loving father's never-ending compassion with all its consequences on the other hand.

Taken from human life, the example of the prodigal son was the most important one, since therein I showed My listeners, besides the family ties, how a father should be and how, unfortunately, only very few of them actually are. By the father's joy in the returned son, I wanted to show them how infinitely greater will be the joy of the Creator of all beings when He sees men, whom He had put out into the world as free beings, return to Him of their own accord. Through this parable I could make them understand that in My kingdom of spirits the joy over such a return is even greater than in the life of a family when a long missed member has returned, by figuratively speaking of the feast which the father ordered when his son, whom he had believed dead, came back.

Thus these parables presented three pictures from human life which applied not only for those times, but all times, including yours.

I spare no pains to save the lost sheep and sons, leading home the former and inducing the latter to return of their own free will. Admonitions, troubles of every kind, illness and bereavements shall keep reminding them that there is still another world besides the visible one. I do not overlook a thing, and actually the entire creation demonstrates to you in what way the prodigal son must gradually return to Me, his Creator and Father. For eons of time this process has been and still is taking place on other worlds. On your earth it is approaching its conclusion and a great step forward will have been accomplished, enabling the bound spiritual to evolve more easily and quickly towards the destination for which I have chosen this earth-globe and its inhabitants. Everything in the entire universe must become spiritualized, must evolve upwards; but you people, for whose sake I Myself came to earth, have a greater mission before you than millions of other spirits of other worlds. For not without reason and purpose did I choose your earth and upon it My own humiliation as an example for My entire realm of spirits.

That is why all of you are here surrounded by more temptations, since the price of your future existence is greater than that of many beings upon other globes who go slowly through their process of purification and transformation whilst you, endowed with the great light of My Word and example, can - with a strong will - soon attain for what other beings need unimaginably longer periods of time. Here on this small earth the process of spiritualization must be faster. Everything has been arranged in such a way and all means are available for humans, as they spiritualize themselves, their soul and through it their body, to encourage retroactively also the spirits bound in dark matter towards faster progress. For, coarsely built souls need coarse, rigid matter, whereas finer, spiritually developed beings require also a lighter basis. Therefore, as mankind progresses in its spiritualization, the world in which it has to live follows it step by step.

In view of this, you should make every effort to promote this process of spiritualization. Begin with yourselves, for the more you can forgo the worldly things, the more your inner being will become spiritualized. It will eventually shine through the outer form producing a reflection of the inner content.

This progression, the more it manifests itself first with a few only but later on with many -, will bring about the great solution to My spiritual question, when I, as the one shepherd, will lead all of you as My sheep to the rich pastures of the celestial light, to receive all the spiritual things a loving Father has prepared for you from time immemorial.

Make therefore sure that you further this purpose as much as possible. Think of the joy of the spirits and beings that are so concerned with your destiny. And even if this progress must be accompanied by all kinds of suffering and struggles, the goal is worth all this trouble. Your own joy at having overcome all troubles, the joy of those who rejoice with you in the beyond, your reward with My everlasting fatherly love and the ever-growing advance from beatitude to beatitude, from enjoyment to enjoyment will make you forget the small hardships of a short trial life.

Therefore, follow the Shepherd and do not stray again onto other roads after He has gone to so much trouble to show you the right way to everlasting life and His sonship! Amen.

Gottfried Mayerhofer: The Lord's Sermons (page: 84 - 88)