

• The Quiet Hour •

The Lost Sheep and Lost Coin.*

BY WAYLAND HOYT, D. D.

Receiveth sinners and eateth with them (v. 2.) To eat with one, especially in Oriental custom, was to acknowledge friendship with one. Though the proud criticise, Christ keeps aloof from none. He loves sinners, though not their sin. "The pride of propriety never understands the liberty of love." "The great variety of sinners, the representative of nearly every kind and class received by Jesus and His apostles, is worthy of particular notice. How widely and graciously welcoming is our Christ! Let not the worst sinner think such a Christ will refuse him.

He spake unto them this parable (v. 3.) Notice that all the exquisite parables—lost sheep, lost coin, lost son—sprung from the disdainful murmuring of these bitter Pharisees and scribes. So out of evil God will bring good. Notice also, how our Lord seized and used opportunity. The Pharisee could not murmur, but he would make their murmuring a door into true teaching. Try to turn all things into ways of service for your Lord.

Having lost one of them (v. 4.) This parable is a parable of seeking love, and in showing what God does toward the lost, it discloses what should be our feeling and action toward them. Learn (a) the value of a soul; though it be but one, its lost condition stirs the heart of God. (b) A lost soul is a loss to God. "The loss here is sustained, not by the sinner, but by God. He is the Shepherd whose sheep have wandered off. To God the sinner is as something lost to Him to whom it belonged." Yes, it is true, God misses the sinner. (c) "A natural and apt type of the sinner is a lost sheep, without wisdom to return to the protection of the shepherd, and without means of any protection in himself from the dangers of the wilderness."

Go after that which is lost (v. 4.) God seeks the lost. All the atonement is latent here. "For God so loved the world," etc. Christianity is not initially men's search for God, but God's search for men. The good Shepherd goes himself; He does not send another—man, angel, or archangel. It is by personal work, not by proxy, we are to seek and to save that which is lost.

Until he find it (v. 4.) Learn the loving persistence of God in Christ. Thus should we be lovingly persistent in our seeking to save others. Restorationists declare this a passage teaching that all will finally be saved. But it is one thing to find and another to recover. We may not lose sight of the other Scripture teaching of the power of a bad will. "Ye will not come unto Me."

He layeth it on his shoulders (v. 5.) Exquisite teaching here. The Good Shepherd does not drive back; He carries back. He helps. This ought to still the tears when we say we cannot live a Christian life. You cannot in yourself, but you can in the strength of Christ.

Rejoice with me (v. 6.) It is the worst symptom for any heart or any church when the news of another saved one is not news the gladdest.

There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety

*S. S. Lesson, Oct. 21st, Luke 15:1-10.—Golden text: There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.—Luke 15:10.

and nine righteous persons, which need no repentance (v. 7.) One interpretation here is that Christ is speaking ironically; that the ninety and nine just persons refer to the Scribes and Pharisees who imagine themselves such, who think they need no repentance, though they do sorely. The teaching then is that heaven rejoices over even one really repentant and saved sinner, that heaven is not at all stirred with joy over a proudly complacent self-righteousness. Here is another interpretation. "It is positively said that these ninety and nine need no repentance; so it is implied that they have never sinned." Therefore the reference must be to those unfallen spirits who have never lost their first estate. Then the leaving of the ninety and nine would mean the leaving of heaven by the eternal Son that He might seek the lost, His entrance into our world by incarnation, and everything included in His subsequent atoning ministry. Under either interpretation we see that what goes on on earth is not unknown in heaven, that every saved one occasions joy in heaven, that a chief interest of heaven is the salvation of the lost.

Or what woman having ten pieces of silver if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? (v. 8.) Christ turns everything to spiritual account, even such a household mishap as this. What an Oriental woman most cherishes are such coins; they are her heirloom; her own special property; her husband has no right to them. Such a woman wears such coins hanging from her braided hair; so one could easily be lost.

I have found the piece which I had lost, (v. 10.) We may learn such spiritual lessons as these: The coin was greatly valued; so God values a soul. The coin was lost; so souls may be. Though lost, the coin was still so valuable as to be worth the searching for; it is thus with the soul. Not carelessly but diligently does God seek souls: nor should we be laggard or easily baffled in our endeavors to bring them to Jesus. Announced joy is greater than joy kept secret. Heaven is stirred with joy when even one soul is saved.

Explanatory Notes.

Eateth with them (v. 2.) This was especially opposed to the Pharisees' ideas, and Jesus had done it in the case of Levi and others.—Having lost one of them (v. 4.) In addition to what Jesus had said of Himself as the good Shepherd in John 10, He had used practically this same parable in Matt. 18:12, 13.—The wilderness (v. 4.) Such country as would be the regular pasture of the flock, and leaving the ninety and nine there does not suggest that they were in any way neglected.—Piece (v. 8.) Worth about the same as the coin called a penny, or a day's wages of a workman.

The best reward for having wrought well already, is to have more to do.—Charles Kingsley.

The Cry From India.

The following letter reveals the urgency in the Central India Mission for more help. Our missionaries are finding the burden too heavy. We are glad help goes out soon:

Ujjain, Aug. 16th, 1900.

Dear Mr. MacKay: Got a telegram last night that Mr. Milligan, of the Irish Presbyterian Mission had died. He was a laborer of an especially good kind for the Bihis. His death recalls to mind several things. One is that our mer are so pressed with the burden of famine relief that some of them are ready to fall with the burden. Ledingham I saw last week at Presbytery and would like to have ordered him off to the hills at once. Others are also run down, and yet there is so much to be done for some time to come. After a couple or three months there will be plenty in Malwa, as the rains have now come on nicely and the black cotton soil holds the moisture well; but in the great Bhil country where the destruction to cattle has been so great the soil is comparatively barren and consequently there will be great scarcity for at least another year. If only we had as many missionaries for that district as we have for the whole field, much might be done. I believe we could establish christianity there as it is not, during all these years, established in any part of our Central India field. I make bold to plead for some of the Honan missionaries to come and help us. Dr. Leslie wanted to come to the Bhil before he was appointed to China, you remember. A man with missionary experience of the people of the East, and a helper who knew English, could do this year in the Bhil country a mighty work. I could find opportunity for five of them in the Bhil country for a work that the church would have cause to rejoice in for ages. Then there is the chaplaincy at Mhow and English work in other departments. But my plea is especially for the poor destitute Bihis. I am buying from special funds received in India some cattle here. I have now got 38 and will send them by train to Dohad and from there they will march in. But what are they among so many who need? I have also bought five camels for transport and I expect we may have to buy more for I do not see how otherwise grain can be got in for the people; but all we I can reach such a very small portion of the people. Hence my hope that some relief might be found for my poor people by help from China. India is sending her military officers to China because of special need in that line, could not the church send from China some of her officers because of the special need in caring for the destitute? I have been almost knocked out myself, and yet I feel better again and hope to get back to my Bihis in a day or two. The last twenty hours before taking train from the Bhil country I rode some seventy miles and treated a good deal of sick and then had a tumble, the pony turning a somersault on top of me.

Mrs. Buchanan and the children, after some months absence, have come down here from the hills, but it is the time when he that hath a wife so be as he that hath none, and so I must hasten away back. Nor is that fair to the needy worker in Ujjain, but the need is here and the necessity there.

You will be glad to know that sanction has been obtained to go on with the bungalow of ladies here and that work is now progressing. Every time I could I ran in (once or twice a month) to Ujjain and made it a point to see some of the officials and they profess friendliness, so I hope we may have no more trouble here. They had threatened to throw out the women (widows) and children of Ujjain, but I think that is also a thing of the past. Hence things are looking brighter here. Miss Jameson and Miss Goodfellow are doing a laborious grand work here. With kind regards, Yours, etc.

J. Buchanan.