

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, October 15, 2016

Occasionally people come into our office complex with a puzzled expression. The eighty or so offices are spread out and there are no real directions posted for first-time visitors. So, I occasionally find myself assisting people in finding their way through the maze. But the other day, an attractive older lady was standing nearby as I was leaving the office and I politely commented, “You look like you’re lost.” She quickly responded, “No, I’m not lost. I’d like to try to figure it out.” Obviously she did not want my help and I left her to her search. That got me thinking about what I consider as perhaps one of the most mysterious and perplexing aspects of life. You see, many folks go through their whole life never knowing their Father in Heaven. They are lost in His eyes. Jesus speaks to this condition in three parables that are worth discussion.

In Luke 15, Jesus scores a trifecta. Speaking to His disciples, some tax-gatherers and a number of Pharisees and scribes, He relates three parables dealing with the lost. First, He conveys a story about a man who has lost one of his hundred sheep. The man leaves the ninety-nine to search for the one that’s lost. And, he rejoices when he finds the one that had been missing. Next, He tells about a woman who had ten silver coins, but lost one and promptly started to search for the lost coin until she found it. She too rejoiced and told her friends what had transpired. Then, we hear the story of the “Prodigal Son” and we’re amazed by the gladness with which the Father takes his son back after he’s squandered a third of His father’s wealth. According to Mosaic law as found in Genesis 21:18-21, a disobedient son should be stoned to death by the men of the city, but this Father showed compassion to his son. As the younger son, he asked his father for his inheritance while his father was still alive. He abruptly left for the city with his wealth only to see it all disappear and his city friends soon left as well. After working for a pig farmer, he realized what he had given up and decided to return to his father’s house with remorse and ask to be hired by his father as a servant. To his amazement, his father came running to greet him and gave him his best robe and his signet ring and killed a fattened calf to celebrate his return. So how does this all relate to us?

You see, our Father in Heaven knows we are born into sin and we are naturally disobedient and are drawn to the things of this world. We make no time nor show any concern for our Father in Heaven. Yet He loves us so much that He sent His only Son to the cross to die for the sin of the world. In Romans 3:23, Paul reminds us, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” In Romans 6:23 we’re told, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Paul continues in Romans 10:9-10, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

I know that seems too easy, but please remember what it cost Christ. He paid the price for our disobedience and we simply need to accept His work on the cross and follow Him this day forward. Some of you need to admit that you are truly lost and ask God to accept you in your present condition. If you are sincere, He will gladly take you back with the unfathomable love of the Father. In fact, He awaits your eventual return from the ways of this world which leads to destruction.

Here to serve,

Jim Langley, CLU

Passages to Ponder: Exodus 34:6; Psalm 13:5; Jeremiah 29:11-14; John 3:16-19; 1 John 4:7; Jude 1:21

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Exodus 34:6 New International Version (NIV)

⁶And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

Psalm 13:5 New International Version (NIV)

⁵But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

Jeremiah 29:11-14 New International Version (NIV)

¹¹For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.¹²Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

John 3:16-19 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

1 John 4:7 New International Version (NIV)

⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Jude 21 New International Version (NIV)

²¹keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.