

GOOD NEWS FOR THE LOST

NO. 1100

A SERMON
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
Luke 19:10

THE promises of God are like stars, there is not one of them but has in its turn guided tempest-tossed souls to their desired haven. But as among the stars which stud the midnight sky there are constellations which above all others attract the mariner's gaze and are helpful to the steersman, so there are certain passages in Scripture which have not only directed a few wise men to Jesus, but have been guiding stars to myriads of simple minds, who have through their help found the port of peace.

I could mention a number of texts this morning, which I might compare to the pointers of the Great Bear or to the Southern Cross, because they have directly pointed the penitent eye to Jesus, the Pole Star. And by looking to Him, sinners have found “the way, the truth, and the life.”

This text is one of the notable stars, or rather, its words form a wonderful constellation of divine love, a very Pleiades of mercy. The words and syllables seem to glisten to my eye with a supernal splendor. I bless God for every letter of this thrice blessed text, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

But as stars are of small service when the sky is all beclouded or the air dense with fog, so it may be even such a bright Gospel light as our text will not yield comfort to souls surrounded with the clinging mists of doubts and fears. At such times mariners cry for fair weather and ask that they may be able to see the stars again.

So let us pray the Holy Spirit to sweep away with His divine wind the clouds of our unbelief and enable each earnest eye in the light of God to see the light of peace. O that many awakened minds may find pardon and eternal life in the Savior this morning. God grant that in answer to the prayers now silently breathed by many, the blessing of salvation may come to this house.

I. There are four things I shall try to set forth this morning for the comfort of seeking sinners. The first is this—I would have all anxious hearts consider HOW THE OBJECTS OF MERCY ARE HERE DESCRIBED, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save *that which was lost.*”

I feel inexpressibly grateful for this description, “*that which was lost!*” There cannot be a case so bad as not to be comprehended in this word “lost.” I am quite unable to imagine the condition of any man or woman born so miserable as not to be contained within the circumference of these four letters—“lost.”

The man may have gone to a perfect extravagance of vice. He may have ruined himself body and soul. He may be upon the very verge of hell and feel as if he were slipping into the pit—but this word descends to the lowest depth of his misery, for he is “lost.”

Here and there upon our iron-bound coasts there are harbors of refuge, but unfortunately, some of them are only available for large vessels at certain times of the tide. At high-water, a vessel of large tonnage may enter them and find security, but if the tide run out strongly, even though the harbor be there, there is not water enough to enable vessels of great draught to enter.

Behold, my text is a harbor of refuge available at all tides, and even at the lowest ebb the biggest ships of heaviest tonnage may enter here. No matter, though the sinner should need a fathomless ocean of mercy to float in, there is depth enough for him here. And if the wind be blowing horribly this morning, and the storms be out, and all the fiends out with the storms, yet if the tempest-tossed soul can but make sail for this divine harbor—there is no bar at the mouth—no shallow water in the channel,

there is no fear of its being able to enter. This harbor's mouth is exceeding deep in mercy, for the text speaks of, "that which was lost." Souls lost through sin and folly are sought and saved by the Son of man.

Let us consider how men are lost. We know, first, that they are lost by *nature*. However much men may rebel against the doctrine, it is a truth of inspiration that we are lost even when we are born, and that the word "lost" has to do, not only with those who have gone into sin grossly and wickedly, but even with all mankind.

Did you ever notice the other place where this text occurs? It is in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, and the eleventh verse, and it occurs there in a very significant relationship. Let me read you the words. Christ is speaking about little children, and He says, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."

The Lord had placed a little child in the midst of the disciples, and had declared that they must be converted and become as little children, and yet He uttered these words in that connection. From that passage, it is clear that, by nature, little children are lost, and they owe their salvation to the Lord Jesus, when God is pleased to carry them to heaven in infancy.

Jesus is come to seek and to save those who are lost by nature. And it is most certain that no man now perishes through Adam's sin only, and no man is cast into hell because of natural depravity alone—his own personal sin and unbelief cast him there.

A far more terrible matter for us practically is this, that we are, apart from divine grace, lost by our own *actions*. Our nature has revealed itself in our character. Our inward inclinations have developed themselves in our conduct, and we have lost ourselves by our own act and deed. We have erred and strayed from God's ways willfully and wickedly like lost sheep, and now the word "lost" belongs to us by our own overt acts, as well as through Adam's Fall.

And in addition to that, we are lost because our actual sin and our natural depravity have co-worked to produce in us an *inability* to restore ourselves from our fallen condition. We are not only wanderers, but we have no will to come home. We are prodigal sons, but we never say, "I will arise, and go to my Father," until the grace of God puts it into our hearts to do so.

We are like sheep which wander, and wander, and wander, but will never by any chance return, unless the Good Shepherd of souls shall seek us. If this world of ours could suddenly be left to itself, could forget the centripetal force which holds it in alliance with the sun, and could set out upon a fearful journey into the darkness of far-off space, if it should travel so far away that no longer could a single beam of light reach it from the sun, and it were altogether in darkness, it is quite certain that it could never find the sun again. For who could light a candle upon the earth wherewith we might search for the sun?

The sun can only be seen by its own light. Where upon earth would be found the bands and cords with which to draw us back to the sun? The world could only be drawn by an influence from the sun itself—the central orb must give the motive power.

So, when a soul wanders from God, it has no light in it with which to see God and no force in it to draw God to itself. God must enlighten and draw the soul to Him. So that, in this three-fold sense, we are lost by nature, by practice, and by an utter inability to find out our God and to return to Him. Yet, terrible as this lost estate is, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

In addition to this, we are all lost by the *condemnation* which our sin has brought upon us. We are sometimes told by inaccurate talkers that we are in a state of probation. My brethren, nothing can be more unscriptural than such a statement. We have long ago been proved and found wanting. Our probation is over.

We are now, if unrenewed, in a state of condemnation. The trial is not now pending—it is over and we are condemned already for our sins. The fearful sentence of condemnation hangs over every man here who has not believed in the Lord Jesus. The sinner is lost in that sense. It is but a matter of time,

and that time in God's hands, and the condemned man will be taken out to execution and the punishment of divine wrath will fall upon his guilty head.

We are lost because we are under legal sentence and are unable to escape from it. We cannot make atonement to God for the wrong we have done, nor avoid His righteous jurisdiction. No mortifications of the body, no lamentations of the spirit can wipe out a single sin.

*“Could my tears forever flow;
Could my zeal no respite know:
All for sin could not atone,
Christ must save, and Christ, alone.”*

So that, being before the bar of God regarded as condemned criminals, unregenerate men are lost indeed.

More than this, there are certain persons in the world who are lost in a more apparent sense than others are—I mean that they are lost to *society*, to respect, and perhaps to decency. That was the case with Zacchaeus, in connection with whom our text was spoken.

I do not know what may have been his parentage. Possibly he was born of most reputable folk, but he showed a vicious mind and he turned aside from the good old paths. He loved low company and despised his father's seriousness. There was great grief in that household on his account. Zacchaeus was lost to his parents—they had hoped he would have been a credit to their name, but instead thereof he was a dishonor.

They trusted that he would be the staff of their old age, but now he was a scourge to them. They scarcely dared to whisper his name in any company, for he had joined with the men of Belial and mingled with the lowliest sort in the city. And by and by, as men go from bad to worse, Zacchaeus had taken up with the low and infamous trade of a tax-gatherer, and he so pushed his way in it by his sharpness and hardness of heart, that he became chief of the odious band of the extortionate oppressors of the people.

The Pharisees, of course, never looked at him—they passed him by as though he were a dog, while the ordinary people of Jericho, when he was out of hearing, cursed him. Had he not exacted upon one—had he not oppressed another? His very name had a ban set upon it. He was lost to society.

But the Son of man sought him and saved him, lost as he was. Society, to this day, has its rules, by the breach of which persons become outcasts. These rules are, some of them, commendable, but others are arbitrary, one-sided, cruel, and hypocritical. We have sometimes heard men of the world ridicule what they are pleased to call the cant of the church, but we take leave to say that there is no cant so desperately canting as the cant of the world.

There occurred, not long ago, an instance of the world's relentless cruelty to those whom it is fashionable to brand with dishonor. A person who had, perhaps, fallen into sin in her earlier days, was restored to a respectable position. She was received in society among the noblest, but on a sudden, dastardly lips revealed a secret and a sin committed far back was raked up against her.

Henceforth the world put away the woman, never asking her if she had repented or taking her after-conduct into consideration. The world is so pure, and chaste, and immaculate, that it shut out the erring one as if she had been a leper. Though itself reeking with foulest abominations, society feigns virtuousness as pure as the lily and chaste as the snow.

The world is cold, hard, cruel, towards a certain class of offenders. It receives into its embraces men who are, every inch of them, unclean—but a betrayed, deceived, broken-hearted woman, the world shakes off as if she were a viper. This is the society which boasts its gallantry! This is the just, fair-dealing world!

It caresses its noble rakes, but casts off the most penitent among the betrayed. Ah, hypocritical, canting world! Ah, hollow, lying world, to pretend to a virtue which you do not know! Rail not at the

inconsistencies of religious men while your own are so glaring! Cruel tyrant, learn mercy and do justice, ere you become a judge of the servants of the Lord.

Now, the Son of man is come to seek and to save those whom the world puts outside its camp. The world says, “No.” “Shame on her.” “We will not speak to her.” But Christ Jesus says, “I have come to pardon her, and to restore her, and she shall love Me much, because much has been forgiven her!”

There are other cases in which men, by their crimes, most justly place themselves outside the pale of society, and for the preservation of order they are separated from the company of honest men. Now even these should have a door of hope left to them and a way of return. The cry, too often is, “Down with him. Down with him. He has sinned against his fellow men. Put him aside. What do we care what becomes of him?”

But the Son of man, who is infinitely pure and holy, has a genuine horror of sin, so that He really hates it and loathes it, yet does not loathe sinners, but has come to seek and to save them. The sweep of divine compassion is not limited by the customs of mankind. The boundaries of Jesu’s love are not to be fixed by Pharisaical self-righteousness, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Putting all that we have said into a few words, we would thus speak, I may be addressing persons here who feel that they have broken God’s laws, perhaps by no public means or in any of the grosser vices, but they have broken the laws of God. They may feel that they have and are sorrowing in their hearts because of it. They fear also that they have sinned in such a way that it cannot be possible for them to be forgiven.

At the same time, the hardness of their hearts astounds them. They feel themselves to be altogether bad and that no good thing dwells within them. They therefore despair of being saved. Beloved friends, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Does not the description suit *you*? Are you not among the lost? Well, then, you are among such as Jesus Christ came to save.

And if perchance there should be one here who has fallen into the grosser vices, someone who has sullied his name, and degraded himself to the very lowest degree, I am bound not to restrict the text, and I do not desire to do so, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” O you lost ones! O you ruined and destroyed ones! The Son of man is come to seek and to save you!

The Greek word here used for lost is a form of that word which has, by certain modern discoverers, been translated “annihilated,” with a view to buttressing their unscriptural theory of the annihilation of the wicked. It is one of those instances in which the absurdity of such an interpretation ought to be evident even to themselves.

The Son of man has not come to seek and to save that which is annihilated—that would be rank nonsense. But the word is very forcible, and signifies a destruction very terrible, a ruin of the most solemn kind. To be lost is to be fallen altogether, to be destroyed as to all good, to be utterly undone, yet the Lord Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save such as are in this wretched plight.

Why, this text sounds to me like the ringing of joyful Sabbath bells which sometimes mariners have heard at sea. Ships are sometimes surrounded with a dense fog, and the mariners know not whether they are near the land or on the wide ocean—they lie becalmed with no stir in the air, no stir in the sea. The ship has been like a lost thing, without power of motion or knowledge of her whereabouts.

And then suddenly the mariners have heard bells ringing in the blessed Sabbath, and as the silver sounds have pierced the gloomy mist, the mariners have known that they were somewhere near Old England’s happy shores. My text rings out most sweetly through the fogs of your soul’s despair and doubt, and I trust the glad message will reach you, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”—will reach you.

II. Now, let us turn to another point. There is very much of consolation in our text for the guilty, in the second place, if they notice HOW THE SAVIOR IS HERE DESCRIBED, “The *Son of man* is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

As the Son of man He is come. And here note, first of all, *His Deity*. You say, “Deity—how is that? The text says ‘The Son of man.’” Yes, and that is the point upon which I ground my remark. No prophet or apostle needed to call himself by way of distinction the son of man. It would be ridiculous for any one of us to speak of himself emphatically as the son of man—it would be an affectation of condescension supremely absurd.

Therefore, when we hear our Lord particularly and especially calling Himself by this name, we are compelled to think of it as contrasted with His higher nature, and we see a deep condescension in His choosing to be called the Son of man, when He might have been called the Son of God. O my Soul, He who is come to save you, is so plainly God that He sees reason to remind you that He is also the Son of man, lest you should doubt it. No angel’s arm is stretched out for your help, but the arm of Him who created all worlds.

In speaking of Himself as the Son of man, our Lord shows us that He has come to us in a *condescending character*. Not in flames of fire has Jesus descended from heaven, not in His chariot of wrath, girt with the sword of vengeance, does JEHOVAH Jesus come to men. He is come upon His errand of mercy as One who has lain upon a woman’s breast, who has known weakness, suffering, and want, as One who knows by personal experience the lowliness of your estate.

Oh, sinner, is it not joy to know that the Son of God has come to save you as the Son of man? “The Son of man”—that describes also the *tenderness* of His character. A man can sympathize with a man. Jesus, the tender-hearted One, was full of sympathy and in loving gentleness He is come to save sinners.

He is no stern Rhadamanthus, no judge of severe countenance, no Draco with bloody edicts, but Jesus, the Man of Sorrows and the acquaintance of grief. It is as your Brother, touched with a feeling of your infirmities, that Jesus comes to you.

He has, moreover, come in His mediatorial character, for, “There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” He can put His hand upon you and at the same time lay His hand upon God. He who bridges the gulf between the misery of fallen manhood and the eternal dignity of the unsullied God, is come to save the lost. What a joy is this!

And our Lord is come in His *representative character*, for He calls Himself the Son of man, as if to note that He is man for men, the representative man, the Son of man. He is come as the covenant substitute, representing man. He has suffered in our stead, died in our stead, paid our debts in our stead, risen in our stead, and gone to heaven as our forerunner. It is the Son of man who in all things has acted for men, who is “come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Now, it seems to me, dear friends, if the Spirit of God would only help poor troubled hearts to see it, that the wording of this part of my text, though very simple, is full of the richest consolation. Soul, what an attractive Savior you have to deal with! God is a consuming fire—you cannot, O guilty one, go to Him, but Jesus is your Brother, your Friend, the Friend of sinners, who received them and ate with them.

And He it is, great as He is, who is “Come to seek and to save that which was lost.” I tell you what I would have you do—go to Him without fear or trembling. Ere yon sun goes down and ends this day of His mercy, go and tell Him you have broken His Father’s laws—tell Him that you are lost and you need to be saved.

Tell Him that He is a man, and appeal to His manly heart, and to His brotherly sympathies. Pour out your broken heart at His feet—let your soul flow over in His presence—and I tell you He cannot cast you away. Though your prayer be feeble as the spark in the flax, He will not quench it. And though your heart be bruised like a reed, He will not break it.

May the Holy Spirit bless you with a desire to go to God through Jesus Christ, and encourage you to do so by showing that He is meek, and lowly of heart, gentle, and tender, and full of pity.

III. I pass on to our third point and that also is full of comfort, though I will only touch upon it. You who seek salvation should joyfully observe HOW OUR LORD’S PAST ACTION IS DESCRIBED, “The Son of man is come.”

Note, not “shall come,” but “is come.” His coming is a fact accomplished. We could not have said this before the days of Bethlehem’s wondrous birth. We should have had to say the Son of man “will come,” and then you would have needed extraordinary faith to believe that the Son of God would become the Son of man to save you. But He “*is* come.”

That part of the salvation of a sinner which is yet to be done is not at all so hard to be believed as that which the Lord has already accomplished. That Jesus Christ, after being incarnate, and after having suffered for sin, should pardon sinners for whom He has died, does not seem to me to be extraordinary.

But the extraordinary matter lies in this, that He should come from heaven, that He should be born in Bethlehem, that He should tarry here on earth, that He should go up to the cross and down to the grave, and bear and suffer in the sinner’s stead—yet, our Lord has done all that.

The greatest part of the work He has accomplished. Your salvation, if you believe in Jesus, is comparatively an easy matter—He has but to apply that which is already prepared and hand over to your faith that which He has laid by in store.

The state of the case since Jesus has come may be illustrated thus—Certain of our fellow countrymen were the prisoners of the Emperor Theodore, in Abyssinia, and I will suppose myself among them. I hear that the British Parliament is stirring in the direction of an expedition for my deliverance and I feel some kind of comfort, but I am very anxious, for I know that amidst party strifes in the House of Commons many good measures are shipwrecked.

Days and months pass wearily on, but at last, I hear that Sir Robert Napier has landed with a delivering army. Now my heart leaps for joy. I am shut up within the walls of Magdala, but in my dungeon I hear the sound of the British bugle and I know that the deliverer is come. Now I am full of confidence and am sure of liberty.

If the general is already come, my rescue is certain. Mark well, then, O you prisoners of hope, that Jesus is come. Do you not hear it? The Gospel bugle is sounding. Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound! The Captain of our salvation is come. He is at our dungeon gates! He has come to our rescue! He is come! He is come!

Jesus has come, and by His Holy Spirit He is still here, and we may depend upon it, that if He has actually come to the work, He means to go through with it, for He never draws back His hand. When He said He would save men, it was certain He would do so. But now He has come to do it, it is more than certain.

Behold the Lord of glory has disrobed Himself for work. He has hung up His royal robes, and put on a workman’s garb, a human toiler’s garments. He means work, stern, persevering work. He has cast His azure mantle across the sky, and come down here to the city of David robed in mortal clay to wear the garment without seam.

O, sirs, He means to do His Father’s business. He is in real earnest, be sure of that—He has come to do it and means to accomplish His design of love. Besides, He is not like a foolish one who comes to His work and leaves His tools behind Him. Jesus would not come unprepared. The Son of man is an infinitely wise Savior, and you may depend upon it, having come with His Father’s consent, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, He is come with everything that is wanted to accomplish His purpose.

He is come to do a work which He can do, and will do, and in which He will not be baffled though all the powers of earth and hell should contend with Him. “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” My heart rejoices as I feel how sure it is that the lost ones will be saved. If we had heard the sons of the morning sing in solemn symphony, “God Himself has come to scatter the primeval darkness, to bring order out of chaos, and to create life in the earth which lies without form and void,” we would have felt certain of the result.

If God had come to create, He would create, and it would have been no matter of surprise to us to have seen the round earth glowing in the morning light, verdant with new-born vegetation, and populous with variety of life. We are sure that what God comes to do He will do.

In the night when Israel was pursued by the Egyptians and overtaken at the sea, even at the Red Sea, it was a sign of victory when the Lord came to deliver His people. The pillar of cloud went to the rear, turning its black side on the foe and its bright side on the chosen. God was come to smite Pharaoh and to rebuke the proud tyrant.

And oh, you might be sure He would do it—failure was out of the question. When, next morning, the placid deep swept over the angry armies, and all was peace where Pharaoh and his hosts had raged so furiously, and instead of the shoutings of men-at-arms, were heard the sweet voices of damsels, singing, “Sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously,” it was but natural it should be so, for if God came to avenge His Israel, who could stand before Him?

The Son of man *is come* to save. Rejoice, you heavens, and be glad, O earth! He will do all His pleasure. Neither earth nor hell can stand against Him. Seeking, He will save. Yes, He will save that which is lost. All glory be unto His name.

IV. The last point is to be this—there is much of deepest comfort in THE DESCRIPTION WHICH IS HERE GIVEN OF OUR LORD’S WORK.

He is come “to seek and to save.” The enterprise is one, but has two branches. I would have you first notice what our Lord has not come to do. He has not come to aid those who, in their own esteem, are almost as good as they ought to be, to become a little better, and so to enter heaven by their own efforts. I believe that such is the general persuasion of mankind.

If they were to put their beliefs into plain English, their notion is as nearly as possible what I have said. According to them you are to attend a place of worship regularly, and say prayers, and give to the poor, and be as good as ever you can. And then, inasmuch as there will be a little bit in which you will be lacking, you are to trust to Jesus Christ to make up the rest.

Now, mark my word, this is a gross and fatal delusion. There is not between the two covers of this Bible one single word of hope held out to any man who believes in that manner—nay, more, there is the solemn utterance that Christ has not come to save people of that sort at all, for thus it is written, “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. If any of you are very good people, and have no sins, and have done no wrong, and are nearly as good as you ought to be, and only need just to say a little about the blood of Christ, Christ has not come to save such as you are. He has “come to seek and to save that which was lost.” If you are not lost, you have no part nor lot in this matter.

Moreover, the Lord Jesus has not come to aid us in self-sufficient endeavors to save ourselves. I wonder how Christian people can sing that verse—

*“A charge to keep I have,
A God to glorify;
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky.”*

It might suit a Jew at the foot of Sinai, but a Christian should have none of it. If we have to save our own souls, it is all over with us. What! we fit our souls for the sky! We, save our own souls! Why, this is the clean opposite of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The theory of some is that there is much natural goodness in men, and they have only to work it out, and gradually improve themselves into a state of grace.

No, sir, you are on the wrong tack. Do you know what the very first ceremony of the Christian religion is? “Yes,” say you, “baptism.” So it is. And what is baptism? “Buried with Christ in baptism.” Who are buried, then? Living people? No! but dead people. The very first lesson of the Gospel after believing in Christ is that you are, before the law, dead, through having been crucified with Christ and

therefore you must be buried. There is no improving your old nature, mending it up, and beautifying it into perfection—the thing is hopeless, and it must die and be buried.

The Scripture does not say, “Ye must be improved,” but “Ye must be born again”—that is quite another thing. You must be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” A new creation is wanted—not an improvement of the old creature. For what does the apostle say? “The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be.”

There he ends it—“Neither, indeed, can be.” It is all over with the flesh, for corruption has seized upon it. This the believer accepts as fact, “Because,” says the apostle, “we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died.” The death of Jesus, as a punishment for sin, was *our* death, and we died in Him, so that we now live as new men, and risen men, and not as though the old life had been improved into something better.

The old nature is put into the place of death and then the man receives life in Christ—that is how we are saved—not by improving ourselves into something better, but by being newly created by the divine power of the Holy Spirit. “Very discouraging,” says one. Yes! And such discouragement is much needed now-a-days.

If I saw a man trying to climb to the top of a mountain by a path which was quite impassable and full of dangers, I should be his true friend if I discouraged him from dashing himself to pieces. The way to heaven is not by our own works. You who think that you can climb to heaven by the way of Sinai should look to the flames that Moses saw, and sink, and tremble, and despair.

There is no road to God by the way of Sinai. There, at Calvary, is the way—all crimson with the Savior’s blood. Salvation is ours through His atoning sacrifice, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Now, having cleared away the rubbish, let us come to the truth. Jesus is come to *seek* the lost. He did that *personally*. There was a lost woman at Samaria, and Jesus said He must needs go through Samaria. There was a lost man at Jericho, and Jesus said He must abide in that man’s house. What He did personally, He now does under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, in His *providence*.

Sometimes providence takes away a child, lays a man on a bed of sickness, deprives him of his wealth, and all these trials are intended to bring him to Jesus. It is Jesus seeking him. It is an odd thing, my friend, that you should be here this morning—you did not reckon upon being here. Strange circumstances brought you. Suppose the Lord means to save you this morning? Then the providence which brought you to this spot is Jesus seeking you.

As our Lord seeks souls by His providence, He also seeks them by the *Word*. It is very wonderful how the Word of God will come home to people. It is a part of every preacher’s business, who is sent of God, so to preach that persons in the congregation may perceive that he speaks of them. What remarkable things have happened in our ministry and in the ministries of all who are sent of God.

Why, they speak to people as if they knew them. Though they never saw them before, they tell their case and picture their state. God guides His servants, and gives them words that they never thought of till the time came to utter them, so that on the spur of the moment they pick out the character as well as if they had known the man from childhood. Thus Jesus seeks the sinner.

If there be anything in this sermon which suits your case, dear friend, do not talk about what relation it may have to anybody else, but be sure Jesus is seeking *you*. You are a lost one. You have come here in such a condition of heart that you cannot deny your lost state. Jesus is seeking you. Look how the Lord saved Zacchaeus.

It seemed an odd thing that when the Lord was under the tree, He should look up and say, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down.” But Jesus does the same thing still in the preaching of the Gospel. He applies the Word with His power to individual consciences and makes men perceive that He speaks of them. God has a message of love to their souls and they are compelled to hear it—they cannot

shut their ears to it—they must receive it, for *the Spirit of God* comes with it and sends it home with power to their soul. That is Jesus seeking sinners.

But whom Jesus seeks He saves. That is the second part of it—“To seek and to save.” And how is the saving done? That is done, first of all, by the complete pardon of all the sinner’s sins. The very instant that a man trusts Christ with all his heart, the past is blotted out as if it had never existed. All the sins he has ever done in thought, in word, in deed, however crimson in dye, go at once, they are sunk as in the sea, never to be found again.

And this is done upon this one solitary condition—that the sinner believe in Jesus. And even that is not a condition, for He that bade him believe enables him to believe and gives him the faith which saves his soul.

Then the sinner is saved in another way. From the moment that a person believes in Jesus, his nature becomes different from what it was before. He receives a new heart—another influence takes possession of him, another love engrosses him.

When a man is absorbed by some master-passion, what a different man he becomes. The passion for wealth will work marvels. We have known idle persons become very diligent, and profuse voluptuaries become even self-denying and mortifying to their flesh in their ambition to acquire riches.

Now, God gives us another passion—the passion of gratitude to Christ, and love to the God that saved us, and that becomes a master-principle and rules the entire man. He who loved self now loves God and lives for Him. And is that change possible to the most degraded? Yes, possible with God.

If a man has committed every crime in the whole catalog of villainy, and his heart has become hard as the nether millstone, and his disposition altogether base, mean, and groveling, and sensual, and devilish, the Spirit of God can turn that man in a single moment into a lover of that which is true and right and just, can break his heart concerning the past, make him angry with himself for having lived as he has done, and can passionately inflame him with the desire to be perfectly holy.

And that passion within the man can carry him on until he loves his fellow creatures as himself and makes great sacrifices for them—and all for the sake of Jesus, that blessed, crucified Son of man, who came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” We do not preach that Christ forgives men and then lets them live as before, but we assert that the moment He gives the pardon of sin, He gives the new nature too. The Gospel hospital is not merely a place where lepers are harbored, but where lepers are healed, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Brethren, let us cry to Jesus this morning to save us. I will put myself down among the lost by nature and by practice. If there is no one else here that is lost by nature, I am such, and I bless my Lord that He is “come to seek and to save” me, a lost man.

Brothers and sisters, some of you have known His love for many years. Did you not come at first to Him as lost ones? And will you not confess this morning that were it not for His infinite mercy you would still be as lost as ever? What a mercy it is to know we are lost and to trust to Christ who saves the lost. What a blessing to be among the dead who died in Christ, whose life is a new life in Him, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

Martin Luther speaks in his book on Galatians of cutting the devil’s head off with his own sword, “There,” says Martin to the devil, “thou sayest I am a great sinner. I thank thee for that, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and so I feel He came to save me.” And if the devil says to any one of you this morning, “You are lost altogether,” off with his head, my brother, with his own sword, and this very day rejoice that, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Is there anyone here who is not lost, any one in this congregation who needs no saving? Well, then, I cannot say in God’s name a single word of consolation to you. You are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, so you say. But this is what the Lord says to you, “He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and he hath exalted them of low degree: he hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away.”

That is the only Gospel for you. But every poor, heavy-laden, troubled heart, and every soul that feels itself to be lost by nature has this gracious word, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

The last word is this—Let us who are saved seek the lost ones. Jesus did it—O followers of Jesus, do likewise! Is there any work that you could undertake amongst the worst of people? Undertake it. Never be ashamed of mingling with the poorest of the poor and the vilest of the vile, for Christ’s sake.

I always feel intense satisfaction at the remembrance of such useful members of our church as Brother Orsman, engaged as he is from day to day in the very worst part of London, in Golden Lane, seeking that which is lost. I hope there are many here imitating him. I know there are some.

There is room for many more laborers in that department, to seek those that are lost—pre-eminently lost. You need not, however, go to Golden Lane, or Seven Dials—there are plenty of lost people around you—lost people who come to the Tabernacle, lost people who go to church, and lost people who go nowhere on the Sabbath.

Go and seek them. If you are saved yourself, I beseech you by the blood that bought you, by the Christ who loved you, and by the Christ whom you love, go out this very day to seek and to save that which was lost. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 19:1-27

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.