**Sermon Notes – Sunday 12th December**

**‘Rescue – Lost and Found’**

Schools, businesses, and churches all usually have a designated area called “Lost and Found.” People lose things all the time; phones, keys, coats, spectacles etc.

* What have you lost recently that has caused you to feel stressed?

In Luke 15 Jesus tells three parables dealing with lost items. The first story deals with a shepherd who loses just one sheep out of his herd of 100. So only 1% of his herd was missing and he still left the other 99 and went to look for the one that was lost. The next story is about ten silver coins. The woman who owns the coins loses just one coin in her house. She cleans the entire house until that single coin is found. The last parable is one of the most well-known parables of Jesus. It is the parable of the prodigal son. In this story the younger son takes his part of the inheritance and spends it all in a foreign land.

At the end of all three there is a celebration over the return of the lost item.

We need to remember that when you read these parables, Jesus is surrounded by the tax collectors and sinners and is being watched by the religious leaders. Quite often Christians can tend to stress a sinners need for repentance and God’s grace rather than the effort required in searching for the lost.

We serve a God that actively pursues those who don’t know Him. The Pharisees listening to Jesus were very content with where they were in their relationship with God and saw no need to pursue the lost.

All Christians not only have the responsibility but the privilege of seeking the lost whether it is friends, co-workers, or family.

Read: Luke 15:1-11

* Who might represent the sinners and tax collectors in our society today? Are there groups of people that society marginalizes and doesn’t see the need to reach out to (maybe people with AIDS, prostitutes, homeless, or alternative lifestyles). Is there a group you could get to know in order to share God’s story?
* Why do you think the shepherd wasn’t content with just having 99 of his sheep safe?
* Was it really worth leaving the majority to go search for the one?
* What does this say about God’s desire for the lost?
* Which is the greater emphasis in these two parables; the lost being found or the effort required to search for the lost?

Read Luke 15:11-32.

* Can you share a time when you were running from God?
* What made you come to your senses and return?

The elder son represented the Pharisees. They felt no joy over a restored relationship with God. They were more concerned with their own relationship and doing everything right themselves.

* How can believers today guard themselves against this attitude happening to them?
* The elder son’s inheritance was not in jeopardy (the estate had already been divided).
* Why is it so important to remember that no matter how long we have been a believer that we all fall under the same Grace of God as someone who just turned to faith?

Has the Holy Spirit put someone on your heart to pray for and pursue that they might come to faith in Jesus? How could you use the Christmas season to take a step forward in pursuing that person? Pray for one another, that our hearts may be sensitive to the prompting of God’s Holy Spirit in seeking the lost.