

The title for today's message is: **The Search for Lost Sinners**

Jesus said: ***“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?”***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We all have lost something during some point in our lives. We've misplaced things like keys.

We've lost our watches and wallets. We may have even lost a pet, at least once in our life.

What did we do when we noticed that these things were missing? Did we immediately search for them?

Often it depends on the need, or the urgency at the time. If it's something we need, we start searching right away.

What about people who are lost? What do we do when a person turns up missing?

What if our son, daughter, husband or wife mysteriously disappeared? Would we immediately search for them? Of course we would.

Our family is near and dear to our hearts, and minds. You can't simply replace them, like a watch or wallet.

They're important parts of our lives therefore we would spend as much time, and money as necessary, to find our missing loved ones.

We've seen posters in Wall-Mart stores, Post Offices, and on the windows of restaurants announcing that a child, or someone is missing.

We've made it a part of our culture by bringing the news of missing persons to the front of our television programs.

We've forced our government agencies to set up police forces, fire departments and even special search and rescue teams.

All, to find, protect, and save lives. Today, we have a system known as the Amber Alert, again to assist in finding missing children.

Look, all people are important to us, so we even dedicate our time, money, and talents to search for complete strangers who are missing.

For example, A private plane with five people aboard were flying during a storm one night, tragically it crashed into the mountains.

When the plane crashed, it started a fire in the tree line very near to where it came to rest.

Due to the location of the crash, the fire, and the fact that the plane landed upside-down, the local Sheriff called off a search and deemed all five dead.

However, the following morning, two survivors were found. They had walked the 2 ½ miles down from the crash site to a little town.

A third person who also survived the crash, had died the previous night. Had the search not been called off, perhaps, he also would have survived.

So, you can see, when someone is missing, or lost, there's no time to hesitate. We must respond immediately so that the person can be saved.

And there's no difference between that and our own spiritual battles we dealing with today.

And its just as important to respond quickly because we don't know when judgment day will come.

let me ask you, how often do you fail to talk to those around you, witnessing to them, and telling them the good news of our loving savior.

And, how many times do you see things that are contrary to God's word and will, only to do nothing, nor say anything about it?

Not so with our Lord, Jesus Christ. He was born to spread the good news to everyone who will listen, especially those who were not believers.

Jesus said in Luke chapter 5: ***"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."***

So, Jesus spent most of His time talking to tax collectors, prostitutes, thieves, and other's who were finding it hard to understand God's Word.

He even spent time with those Jews in the Temples, and Synagogues , who claimed to be, faithful, God fearing people.

But the truth is the Pharisees and teachers of the law, were just as lost, as the other's whom Jesus spent time with.

Now, we have a great example of this. Paul talks about the grace that God bestowed on him.

His name was once Saul and he was a great oppressor of the Christians, yet he was considered by many to be doing the will of God.

He spoke out against all the followers of Jesus, including Jesus Himself. He would hunt down followers of Jesus, torture them, and murdered them.

But, God used Saul, and molded him into a great missionary and gave him a new name, Paul. You see, Saul was lost, but Paul, was found.

And today there are many people who are lost, people who desperately need us to find them and help them to better understand the Word of God.

Knowing this, why is it that too often, we just ignore the cry's of the lost, and simply look the other way?

Why do we abandon the search before we even get started? Is it our own lack of interest or desire to start the search?

Or, maybe were too afraid of being embarrassed. It certainly isn't a lack of opportunity.

No matter what the reason, its clear, that they have chosen not to act, and in doing so, have failed to place there trust in God.

My friends, there are many out there, unaware that their lost. They haven't found Christ, and they don't know the love of God.

They no longer know the love of mankind anymore. They've only learned that this is a dog-eat-dog world.

And they believe that its only through and by their own efforts, that they can have any hope, for a constructive life.

They lack the understanding of a caring and loving God. Now, you may ask, just who are these people that we say are lost?

Well, the book of Revelation has made it clear, who these people are. They are those who think there good and righteous so they don't need God.

Yet, they failed to feed the hungry, and to give clothing and shelter to those in need.

They failed to reach out to people who needed a helping hand. These are people who will be among the condemned.

That's why once we find someone who hasn't heard the Word of God, it's our duty, to bring them God's message.

Just as the shepherd chooses to leave the 99 sheep behind and search for one sheep that is lost in the wilderness, it's up to us, to do the same today.

It's up to us, to actively engage in the search for the lost, and find those who truly need help.

We plant the seed, and it's up to us to allow the Holy Spirit to do his work. It's because of the Holy Spirit the lost can find their way to God.

And when this happens, when someone comes to God, all the angels and saints in heaven rejoice, yes even for just one sinner.

How do we respond when someone is lost, we search for them, and when they're found, and saved? We bask in the joy of a family reunited.

When someone dedicates their life to Christ we should grab the moment, and thank God, and rejoice with all of heaven.

We also rejoice in the fact that our own sins are forgiven, and our place is guaranteed in heaven.

So, we do in fact have good reason to bask in the glory and mercy of God, and the joy that it brings. Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.