Pastor's Notes

Hello

We've been talking about God's mercy and how that translates to being lost or saved. The bottom line is, you matter to God. Jesus came to "Seek and to save those who are lost." So what does it mean to be lost? And what happens when we're saved? First, what does it mean when we're lost?

1. **We lose our direction.**
   Isaiah 53:6 (NLT) "All of us have strayed away just like lost sheep. We've all left God's path to follow our own ways."

2. **We lose God's protection.**
   Zechariah 10:2 (NLT) "My people are wandering like lost sheep, without a shepherd to protect and guide them."

3. **We lose our potential.**
   1 Corinthians 2:9 (NCV) "No one has ever seen or heard or even imagined the wonderful things God has prepared and arranged for those who love him."

4. **We lose our happiness.**
   Luke 15:14 (NLT) "The younger son wasted all he'd been given and eventually he became miserable and lonely."

5. **We lose our home in heaven.**
   Luke 9:25 "What good is it for a person to gain the whole world, if they lose their soul?"

That's the life experience of those who are lost. Not connected in a daily relationship, in a vital connection with God, spiritually lost with no personal relationship with God. So, if saved is the opposite of lost, next let's look at what happens when we're saved? When we receive salvation...

1. **Salvation rescues us from ourselves.**
   1 Timothy 2:5 (NCV) "Jesus is the only one who can bring us to God. He became a human and gave himself to rescue all of us." Psalm 50:15 (NLT) "Trust me in your times of trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory."

2. **Salvation recovers our potential.**
   Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and worn out from carrying too much. Learn to trust and rest in me and you'll recover your life."
   Joel 2:25 (TEV) "I will give you back what you lost in the years when the swarms of locusts ate your crops."
3. Salvation reconnects us to God.

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 (CEV) "Anyone who connects to Christ becomes a new person. [Rescued, recovered and reconnected.] The past is forgotten, and everything becomes new. God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us."

That's how much you matter to God. That's the kind of love God has for you; that his wounds on the cross would pay for your rescue, your ransom, your recovery, and for your reconnection. Above everything else, God wants to show you mercy. So, if we're lost what do we do to get saved? How do we connect to God's mercy? How can we experience God's mercy? How do you do that? Here's the answer. You do the same three things that the prodigal son does in the story from Luke 15. This young rebel who blew half the family inheritance and then comes home with his tail between his legs and goes, "Dad, just make me a servant." You do the same three things that this guy did. Because you want to be saved! Listen! You want to be saved! And here are the three things you must do.

1. Get fed up with your life.

That's the starting point. You've got to get fed up with your life. Nothing happens until you become discontent with the way things are right now. At some point you've got to go, "Okay! I'm not going to put up with this anymore. I don't like the way I've been living. There's got to be a better way to live than living with all this pressure, this stress, this fatigue, this drifting. God, you've got to help me. This is not what I want with my life. I'm not going to put up with it anymore. I'm tired. I'm tired of the pain. I'm tired of the pressure. I'm tired of the stress. I'm tired of the disappointments I've had in life. I'm tired of the busyness. I'm fed up. I'm tired of pretending. I'm tired of faking it. I'm tired of my failures. I'm tired of my frustrations. I don't like how I'm living. The truth is I don't even like who I am. And I don't like what I'm becoming."

Until something like that happens in your life you're not going to be saved. You've got to get fed up with the way you've been living. I am fed up with being disconnected from God. I am fed up with being distant from my Heavenly Father who loves me, created me and has given me everything good in my life. You've got to get hungry. You've got to get thirsty. You've got to be desperate for a change. You've got to sometimes be in the pigsty and say I'm going home. I know it's embarrassing and I've really blown it but I'm going home to my Heavenly Father.

The Bible says this in Luke 15:13-17 (NLT) "...he wasted it all ...he had nothing left ...he got desperate and hungry ....then he finally came to his senses..." This is where transformation starts. I refuse to live the way
I've been living one more minute. Jeremiah 29:13 (MSG) God says this "You'll find me when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else." Not some casual churchianity. No, no. You're serious. I want it more than anything else. The reason why most people never get connected to God, why most people live lost lives is because they're happy to live without God. They're happy to live without God. And they think, "It's not that bad. It's okay."

Let me explain it to you. It's kind of like if you were living an oxygen deprived life. Let's say you had COPD or emphysema and you can't breathe enough to really get your body full of oxygen. You've got enough oxygen to just keep you alive. You're surviving, but you get winded on stairs and you sure don't have enough oxygen to be brilliant, to be creative, to be innovative, to be energetic. You don't have enough oxygen to feel good. You don't have enough oxygen to live life to the fullest. You're living in an oxygen deprived environment where it's like "I'm barely getting by. I'm surviving. I'm alive. But that's it." Getting saved is like turning the oxygen on full blast in your life. Jesus says, I've come that you might have life to its fullest.

Let me give you another metaphor. It's as if Satan had taken your head and shoved it under the bathroom water and you can't breathe under water. You're holding your breath and he's got it held down there. He's holding it down and he's holding it down. And Satan is going to hold your head under that water until you start fighting. No, no. I've got to breathe. And then every ounce of your body goes "Enough's enough! You're not going to hold me under the water anymore! I'm going to breathe. I want real life. I want the life I was meant to live. I want to be connected to the Father who loves me. I want to be connected to the God who knows my potential. You want to destroy me; he wants me to live to my fullest and I'm not going to take it anymore. I'm going to fight. I'm going to fight." Get fed up with your life! After you get fed up here's the second thing you do.

2. Own up to your sin.

I own up to my sin. I just admit it. "God, I've made a mess. I've blown it. I've sinned. I've done what I wanted to do not what you wanted me to do. I've followed my way not your way." You be honest about your feelings. You have the courage to face the truth about you. That's scary. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free. But first it makes you miserable. So you admit the truth and then the freedom comes out of that. Own up to your sin.

The Bible says in Luke 15:17-18 (NLT) This young man "When he came to his senses, he said... 'I have sinned against God and you..."That's
called a confession. When he came to his senses. Sense or senses. You say, the way I have been living does not make sense. The way I've been living has been irrational. The way I have been living has been illogical. Disconnected from the God who made me and loves me? What's that all about? Thinking that I know more than God? What's the logic of that? I'm just going to come to my senses. I've got to have a moment of clarity.

You will never be saved until you have a moment of clarity where first you get fed up and then second you own up. I'm not God. I've tried to be God. I've tried to do my own thing. I've wanted to be God. But you have a moment of clarity. You come to your senses. To stay distant from God is insane. It doesn't make sense. It's not smart and it's unsustainable. I get fed up, I own up. And then there's a third thing I do. This is what Jesus did.

3. Offer yourself up.

I offer up myself to God. I want you to notice the change in the attitude from the thing that the young man said when he left his father to go wherever he went. And the thing that he said when he came back to his father years later in a much humbler attitude. In Luke 15:12 the son left home, he drifted away, he left in rebellion saying this "Give me my share." Notice he says give me. It's all about me. Give me, give me, give me. It's all about me. I don't care about you, Dad. I don't care about our family. Just give me. It's all about me. It's very self-centered. Years later when he comes back, here's what Luke 15:19 says, "He returned to the Father saying, Make me a servant." A little bit different attitude. He leaves saying give me. He returns saying make me.

That friends, is salvation. It's turning from self-centeredness to God centeredness. Self-centered - give me everything I deserve in life to God-centered - make me whatever you want me to be. That's salvation. If you haven't said that you're not saved. You're not. You're still lost. You're still over in that category. You're valuable. You're oh so valuable. So valuable that Jesus Christ died for you. But you're lost. You've got to move from give me - it's all about me - to make me. God whatever you want to do with my life. Make me your servant. That's a heart transformation. From self-centeredness to God-centeredness. Luke 15:20 (NLT) says this, "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran out to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

I want you to notice the father's response. In Luke 15:23-24 it says "Filled with anger and frustration..." No. It doesn't say that. "Filled with love and compassion, [You come to God after all those years that you've messed up, God's going to get filled with love and compassion.] the father ran out to his son. [He didn't even wait for him to get all the way back
home. Come all the way back. He runs out to meet him. The guy probably hasn't had a bath in a year. He's been living with pigs. He stinks. He's dirty. He's smelly. He's got pig slop on him. The father doesn't wait until he gets cleaned up. He runs out to his son...]

*throw his arms around him and kissed him.* [Then he says bring the best.] *Bring the best robe and put it on him.*

*Bring the best signet ring,*" The family ring. The signet ring is what you would put in the wax and then that was your family signet which says I'm good for this bill. It was the credit card of that day. So what he's saying is bring out the best there is. Give the guy the black American Express card. This is the guy who just blew half the family inheritance. That's mercy.

Then he says find the best beef that we've got on the ranch. We're having a barbeque. We're having a party. *"My son who was lost has been found."* He's been saved. You know that the Bible says they have a party in Heaven every time one person steps across the line. And God always takes the initiative. Look at Romans 5:2 (MSG) *"We throw open our doors to God and we discover that at the same moment that he's already thrown open his doors to us."* He already took the initiative. He took it 2000 years ago when he came and died for you. He paid for your sins before you were born. That's how much he took the initiative. He wants to rescue you.

Maybe you remember many years ago there was this little girl who fell down this long deep pipe. It was like a culvert. It took 36-48 hours for them to get that little girl. She's an adult obviously today. The whole nation was transfixed when that little girl fell into that pipe and she was too lodged in it to get in or out and they couldn't figure out what they were going to do. Can you imagine if the rescuers had shown up and said, "Hi honey are you down there?" Yeah, I'm down here. "We're here to rescue you." Well thank you. I'm doing okay, it's quite cozy here. I'm feeling safe and secure. So far so good. I don't really need saving, thanks!

How many people do you know who are lost are saying, so far so good? How many people do you know who are lost who are saying, it's not that bad? Yeah, you know you can eat kale or you can have fried chicken at the Macedonia Chicken supper this coming Saturday. The difference, the taste is quite different. If God has a better life for you why in the world would you stay stuck in the rut? 2 Corinthians 6:2 (TLB) *"Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today he's ready to save you."* I've told you that these three stories are all about how much you matter to God; how valuable you are to God. How do you determine something's value?

It's real simple how to figure out what something is worth. What is somebody willing to pay for it? How much is your house worth? Not what you think it is. It's only worth what somebody is willing to pay for it. And if
nobody's willing to pay for it, it's not worth that much. You can put a price on it. You might have a rare coin. What's it worth? It's worth whatever somebody's willing to pay for it. And if nobody's willing to pay for it then it's not worth any more than that.

How much are you worth? Jesus says you're worth dying for. You want to know your value? You look at the cross. You're lost; but you're valuable. And Jesus says you're worth this much. The most famous verse in the Bible is, John 3:16 (NCV) "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son so that whoever believes in him may not be lost, [may not perish] but have eternal life."

Blessings,

Scott