

Identifying The Lost

Text : **Matt. 7: 15-23 - & - II Thes. 1: 5-12**

INTRODUCTION :

A. My grandfather's generation had colorful sayings to describe every situation.

1. For example, When we got a new police chief, he told all us young bucks, *"You boys had best mind your P's and Q's for a while cause a new broom sweeps clean."*
 - a. It was colloquially cute, but we didn't fully comprehend what he meant.
 - b. However, we were all quick to grasp his meaning my older cousin got a ticket for peeling his tires while pulling out of the A & W. (*establishes local custom*)
2. There was a saying for every occasion.
 - a. Of customers who did not buy, my first employer used to say, *"He wouldn't know a good deal if he stepped in it."*
 - b. Describing a lazy employee who had to be told every step to take, Dad would say, *"That boy's not afraid of work; he can set and sleep right beside it."*
 - c. **ILL** - A man finished cutting the lumber he was instructed to prepare for a job and immediately sat down. When asked why he was just setting there he replied, *"I finished my job I have nothing to do."* His workplace was a mess, the scrap had not been discarded and the finished lumber had not been taken over to the carpenters. None-the-less, he felt abused when he was told to get up and get to work because his instructions had not included clean up when finished and give the lumber to the carpenters.

B. Some of the old colloquial sayings can accurately describe spiritual conditions.

1. Spiritually, some have the same mindset as the workers who will respond to specific instructions, but does not see things that need done and do them.
 - a. They will invite a person to church only when an elder instructs them by name. *"Will you please go invite John Jones to come to church with you this Sunday."*
 - b. They could live next door to that John for years and never think to invite him. **Why ?**
2. We live in a world filled with lost people, but never think of them as lost.
 - a. Most people with whom we work and play are lost.
 - b. Many of our friends and loved ones are lost.
 - c. There are those within our own families who are lost.
3. Like the guy who sat down in the dirty workspace, Christians have a tendency to live among the lost and think nothing of it.
 - a. We're so used to life among the lost that we view them as normal, as acceptable.
 - b. It does not occur to us to view people we as **"sinners"**, as enemies of God.
 - * ***We think in earthly terms.***

C. How do we know who is lost ?

1. They don't wear a sign.
2. Unlike Cain (**Gen. 4: 15**) they are not visibly marked by God. (**666**)
3. They look just like us, but God sees the difference.

For just a few moments, let us consider how we can identify the lost.

I. One can be lost and not know that he is lost.

A. Parents learn to know when their children have done wrong.

1. All children have a conscience and feel guilt when they know they did wrong.
2. The guilt will manifest itself differently in each child, but it is observable.
 - a. The more they profess innocence, the more obvious their guilt becomes.
 - b. This is how parents know when their children are lying to them.
3. However, when they have unknowingly done wrong, guilt is absent.

* **The ability to observe guilty body language is important to law enforcement.**

B. Those who do not “know God,” cannot be saved. (*Don't know = Don't fear.*)

1. Since God is the one who must save, all who are saved must know Him.
 - a. **I Tim. 2: 3-4** This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,
4 who desires all men to be saved ...
 - b. Compare : **I Tim. 1:1 , Titus 1: 3 , 2; 10 , 3: 4 , Jude 25**
2. Salvation is only for those who have faith in God. (*must know to have faith*)
 - a. **Heb. 11: 6-** And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
 - b. Compare : **Eph. 2: 8**
3. All those who do not know God will be separated from Him eternally.
 - a. Remember our text : **II Thess. 1: 8-9** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,
 - b. **One's eternal relationship with God must begin on the earth.**
4. **Therefore**, we know that one who does not have a relationship with God is **lost**.

II. Many who think they have a relationship with God are lost.

A. Satan propagates many lies to cause people to miss Heaven.

1. He lied in the garden. (**Gen. 3: 4**)
2. God identifies Satan as the father of all lies. (**John 8: 44**)
3. Until this very day, Satan continues deceiving people who seek God.
 - a. *“One church is as good as another, choose the one you like best.”*
 - b. *“We’re all going to the same place; we’re just traveling on different roads.”*
 - c. *“The services of the church should be entertaining and make one feel good.”*

B. Jesus teaches us there will be many *“active church goers”* in hell.

1. Listen to the words of Jesus.

Matt. 7: 21-23 Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven will enter. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’
2. Jesus here refers to people who THINK they are saved. (*anticipate Heaven*)
 - a. They think they have been actively serving Jesus, but Jesus did not accept them.
 - b. They’re lost because they’ve been victimized by teachers who taught them wrong.
 - c. Though their conscience was clear, they were condemned.
3. Many false teachers are in this same circumstance.
 - a. They are sincerely teaching what they have been taught ... believing it to be true.
 - b. Those they teach in turn teach others to teach the same erroneous doctrine.

Remember : To “prophesy” is defined as to speak for God.

Therefore, sincere people are misrepresenting God in the name of Jesus.

Consequently, they are lost and all who follow them are lost.

*** It is Satan’s deceptions which have created the maze of churches in the world today. His actions are fulfilling this prophecy of Jesus.**

*** As diligently as Satan seeks to hide the truth, Christians must make it known to the world.**

III. There are those who are respected as “good people” who are lost.

A. We have no problem recognizing very wicked people as being lost.

1. The rapists and the murderers are considered wicked and lost by all.
2. The profane, the drunkards and the addicts are generally condemned by all.
3. Most people put lawyers and politicians into this category as well.

B. A young man considered righteous by all talked with Jesus, but left Jesus knowing he was lost. (*He was unwilling to loose his life to Christ.*)

1. **Matt. 19: 16-26** ... “*The Rich Young Ruler*”
2. This man had done his best to obey the law of God. (Respected by all.)
3. Even the Apostles were surprised that he was not approved.
Vs. 26 “**Then who can be saved?**”

C. God considers those who measure themselves by what others think of them as being without spiritual understanding.

II Cor. 10:12- For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

D. The fact is that no one can live up to God standard.

1. **Rom. 3: 10, 23**
2. **Rom. 6: 23**
3. All sin so all who have not received the gift of Salvation are lost.

IV. Some of the happiest people you know are lost.

A. Ignorance is bliss. (*They don't know their lost condition.*)

1. **ILL-** Many cheap science fiction movies have people happily playing in the water unaware of the monster below which is about to eat them.
2. Those who do not know God have no fear of His wrath or judgment to come.

B. This world offers many pleasures and opportunities for gain.

1. Many in this world live as lovers of pleasure rather than loving God. **II Tim. 3:4**
2. Those physical pleasures become addictive. **Titus 3:3**
3. They promise what they cannot deliver and leave you disappointed wanting more.

C. This earth is passing and it's pleasures will fade away.

1. Moses understood that pleasures are brief, Godliness has eternal benefits.

Heb. 11: 24-26 By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (*Moses had the best, but looked for better – eternal.*)

2. James warned us of the danger involved in living for pleasure.
 - a. "I just want to be happy." is the common attitude of the world.
 - b. **James 5: 5-** You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

D. That which seems to make one happy brings eternal destruct away from God.

1. **Luke 8: 14** tells us the pleasures and cares of this world destroys spirituality.
2. This is why the Apostle John warns us ...

"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." **I John 2: 15** (cf - **James 4:4**)

V. Many know they are lost and know how to be saved, but remain lost.

A. Jesus invites all to be saved, but each individual must accept His invitation.

1. **Matt. 11: 28-** Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.
2. **John 14: 6** ... No one who does not come to Jesus will enter Heaven.
3. *Jesus is the ONLY option. To reject Him is to reject Heaven.*

B. One must come to Jesus on His terms and in His way.

1. Jesus will save anyone who is willing to obey Him.

Heb. 5: 9- Having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,
2. The obedience that Jesus requires must come from the heart. (*faith response*)

Rom. 6: 17-18 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. (Cf – **Rom. 6: 1-7**)

C. Coming to Jesus involves a total surrender of one's life to Him.

1. **Luke 9: 23-25** And He was saying to *them* all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. ²⁵ For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"
2. **II Cor. 5: 14-19** ... One must surrender total control of his life to God and live his life to accomplish Christ's will on the earth.
 - a. Surrender totally changes the focus of one's life.
 - * *It is not just a mental process; it completely takes over one's life.*
 - b. One no longer lives for fun and profit, but for the glory of God.

D. Surrender begins with turning from the world and obedience to the gospel.

1. Remember our text : "Dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." **II Thes. 1: 8**
2. Many know what they need to do to be saved, but have not done it.
3. On the day that the Lord comes or calls it will be too late. **Heb 9: 27**

CONCLUSION :

A. Who are the lost ?

1. The lost are people who don't know God.
2. The lost are people who sought God but were misled.
3. The lost are people we consider evil, but also some we respect as righteous.
4. The lost are people are some of the happiest people you know.
5. The lost is anyone who has not obeyed the gospel.

B. Who do you know who is lost ? (*All outside Christ are lost.*)

1. Are those you love among the lost ?
2. Are your friends and neighbors among the lost ?

C. What are you doing to bring the lost to salvation ?

INVITATION :

Are you among the lost ?

Lesson Texts : (NASV)**Matthew 7: 15-23**

- **15** Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **16** You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? **17** So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. **18** A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. **19** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **20** So then, you will know them by their fruits.

- **21** Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. **22** Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' **23** And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

II Thessalonians 1: 5-12 (NASV)

5 *This is* a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which indeed you are suffering. **6** For after all it is *only* just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, **7** and *to give* relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, **8** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **9** These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, **10** when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed. **11** To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, **12** so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and *the* Lord Jesus Christ.