

Adam Sandiford

This week's message was preached by Paul Moore. The title of the sermon is "Ambassadors of Christ." The scripture reading is second Corinthians, chapter five, verses 16 to 20. So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly point of view, though once we regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here. All this is from God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. But God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, counting people's sins against them, and he is committed to us the message of reconciliation. We're therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Paul Moore

Have you heard of this thing now because of Corona? Social distancing is that, has anyone heard of that? Now, not only are we not supposed to shake each other's hands and sneeze on each other and lick each other's faces and whatnot, but we're supposed to not even like be in social gatherings together to limit the spread. It actually ties into our lesson this morning. Because there can be a lot of our circumstances where we don't really interact with a lot of other people. Sometimes because of fears, sometimes because uncomfortableness but in some ways, it can sometimes be very difficult to interact. And if we can't interact, how do we share the love of Christ? So this morning, I want to focus in on Luke 15. We're going to start though back It's 2020 so 1945, 2020 is 55 years No, no 75 years. Don't ask Mr. Boden how well I did in math. In 1945, just weeks before the end of the Second World War, the USS Indianapolis, large US cruiser was given a secret mission only a few days and only a few days, and only in a few of the Admiralty knew what they were up to, the Indianapolis's own captain and crew. They didn't know what the two cylinders they took aboard in San Francisco were. One account from a sailor the shipment was no bigger than two old fashioned ice cream freezers cylindrical shiny aluminum. The lid of the bucket like container had bolted down and I want to talk for two to two eyebolts which they used to pipe to run through to carry it if they needed to take it from place to place from another sailor, rumors started flying all over the place. What could this be? Wagers were being made and everybody was betting on what could be inside. They were wagering it was anything from some sort of new type of airplane engine to scented toilet paper for General MacArthur. Needless to say, no one ever collected on those bets. Does anyone know what they were? Any history buffs? The uranium for the first atomic bomb. They sailed across the Pacific to Tinian Island, where they offloaded their cargo without incident. It was the uranium for the first atomic bomb. The captain then charted a routine course across to the Philippines, across the sea. And even though this journey would be routine, the captain inquired about the tactical situation. This is the late stages of the war. The response from tactical command everything is quiet. The Japanese are on their last legs, there's nothing to worry about. Such was the situation that while normally a large vessel such as the Indianapolis would sail with a destroyer escort to protect against smaller boats, submarines, airstrikes, it was deemed not necessary in this case. So just before midnight, July 30, 1945, a Japanese submarine struck the Indianapolis with a torpedo - direct hit on the forward bow. The first explosion rocked the Indianapolis from one sailor I heard an explosion which knocked me off my ready box, knocking me onto the deck. I had no time to get up off the deck before I heard the second explosion, the ammunition I got up as soon as the second explosion and looked forward and found the whole bow was gone.

Another sailor "they tell you to throw your lifejacket in first and jump in and get in your lifejacket. And I looked over and I saw so many guys who do didn't have a life jacket. I decided when I get there, I was going to have one. I strap mine on before jumping overboard and went through the Navy procedure. I talk was going up when I hit the water, fuel and sea and sea water went down my throat. I was gagging and spitting up and trying to swim away from the ship. I finally threw up. I got most of it out. But when I looked when I looked back, the ship was already gone." 12 minutes from the first torpedo hit the Indianapolis sunk, a crew of 1200, three, 900 made it to the surface. Most were covered in oil and many were injured. Some had life jackets, many did not a few were in boats, but most were on makeshift rafts. Most were gathered in groups holding on to one another. Most of at least my media experience with this kind of thing you know is watching Titanic, the North Atlantic is most of my understanding of this kind of thing. And unlike the North Atlantic, you can stay in the sea for a long time in the tropics, there's no risk of hypothermia. The risks are much more long term. no food, no drinkable water. Yes surrounded by water, the sun beating down without rest. And if you don't have a life jock jacket exhaustion and unknown to the survivors, they had thought an SOS surely was sent. But because they were on a secret mission and secret protocols were being observed. There was none. Initially, the mood of the sailors was confidence. They'd be rescued in short order. I mean, the US controlled the waves at that point from one soldier without down at myself is from on sailor looked down at myself, I noticed I was covered in this oil, and my first instinct was get away from it, because it catches on fire, then you're really in trouble. first impulse was to swim So I swam, and I was it was a little after midnight when it happened. And then probably around five or six in the morning, I was still swimming. I didn't have any life jacket, I just swam. I was swimming from midnight till 530. And other sailor while I was completely coherent, this was my thought, keep struggling and stay alive. It was very miserable because the sun burning on the skin, no one could escape it. It was like having your head in a hole in the middle of a mirror. With all that sunlight being reflected and burning on your face. So hot, it was miserable, like some version of hell. You couldn't wait for the sun to go down. When the sun went down, it was such a relief, but then it would get cold and you start to shiver, and you couldn't wait for the sun to come back up.

But then after one day, the situation became much worse. First some of the sailors began to succumb to the thirst, the exhaustion or just despair. But second, the sharks that up until that point were feeding on their dead comrades turned to the survivors. From one sailor, a man began drinking salt water so much that they were so very delirious. In fact, a lot of them had weapons like knives and they'd be so crazy. They'd be fighting amongst themselves. And then there'd be others that drank so much saltwater, they were seeing things they'd say the Indie's down below, and they're giving out fresh water and food in the galley. And they'd swim down and a shark would snap them up. And you could see the sharks eating your comrade from another sailor all the time, the sharks never gave up. We had a cargo net with styrofoam things attached to keep it afloat. there about 15 sailors on this, and suddenly, a wave of sharks hit it, and it was gone. This went on and on. During the second, third and fourth days their numbers dwindled rapidly. It was common just to see a sailor out of despair faceplant in the water and fight off his mates As they were trying to bring him back up, or to see someone just slip out of their life jacket. And then the sharks, constant attacks, intensifying dusk and dawn. At first the survivors it was mostly those that were by themselves that were being attacked. And then the smaller groups and then the larger groups. There were so frequent and so clear the water that the survivors talk about seeing individual sharks below them and seeing them enough they can identify which sharks individually.

Four days after a plane spotted the oil slick, and the survivors, 12 hours after that, two destroyers came to pick up the men in the water. The first question the rescuers had for the survivors. Who are you? What ship are you from? The Indianapolis had been missing for over four days and no one knew of the 1200 officers and crew 900 made it to water 316 survived.

Question this morning. What does it mean to be lost? Let me submit that the crew of the Indianapolis was lost at sea but alone No escorts no oversight. unaware of the dangers. The Japanese torpedo suddenly striking them surprisingly shrinking the ship, survivors injured covered an oil fighting thirst, hunger, and as one day turned to turn to three, despair, and the sharks, the sinking of the Indianapolis wasn't a disaster. It was a series of disasters happening to the same group of people over and over. When we say that those who don't know Jesus are lost. I think this is the type of imagery that should enter our minds. The Lost are not lost, like getting turned around in a new place. When you're driving. The lost are an extremely Danger, losing souls every minute they aren't rescued. When God cares for the lost, it is not that he helps me find the local mini Mart. He pulls out of the water, the oil injured oil covered survivor that has been fighting off the sharks for days. Our text this morning is Luke 15. Here Jesus describes through three stories, the dedication, passion and sacrifice that God gives to save the lost. I believe it's up on the screen. Starting a verse four Luke 15. Four, awesome. Suppose one of you has 100 sheep and loses one of them doesn't he leave the 99 in open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it. And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on the shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says rejoice with me. I have found my lost sheep. I tell you in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents sin over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent So in the story where the shepherd, one day in the business of things a sheep has lost the sheep, the shepherd leaves the rest, probably not without care. But nonetheless he leaves and finds the lost sheep. And what does he do when he finds it? throws a party. He brings his friends neighbors together and rejoices with them. What's the point of the story? What's the moral Jesus getting at? Well compare the flock. How much rejoicing happens in heaven by God? When the 99 who do not need to be repented are found versus the one lost sheep who was found, or the 99 who do not need to repent versus the one lost soul who repents.

Verse eight or suppose a woman has 10 silver coins and loses one does she light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says rejoice with me. I have found my last coin in the same way I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of angels of God over one sinner who repents. So in this story in the last story, we were shepherds. In this story, we're a wife. The only property we own in that place in time would have been that 10 silver coins. This is your lifeline if something should happen to your husband. One day you're dusting the mantel, working away and accidentally knock the coin across the room under a couple pieces of furniture. That coin even though you have nine others is still very valuable. So you light a lamp, use some oil, sweep up the dirt floor, which I always that imagery confuses me, but sweep up the dirt floor. Notice she carefully searches for it. Just like the shepherd she spends time to find the last coin. But this time she spends resources to finding it. She lights the lamp. She doesn't just wait till morning. When she finds it, what should she do? She throws a party, friends and neighbors come over and they rejoice. We are meant to learn the same lesson as the previous story. God values the one sinner who repents over the nine. In this case who did not need to repent.

Verse 11, Jesus continues, there was a man who had two sons, the younger ones said to his father, father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them. Not long after that the younger son got together all he had, and in distant country there, got set off for a distant country, and squandered his wealth for wild living. After he had spent everything there was a severe famine in that whole country and he began to be in need. So he went and hired out himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods of the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. When he came to a census, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare? And here I am starving to death. I will set out and go back to my father and say to him Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy because your son Make me like one of your hired servants. So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him. He ran to his son threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. put a ring on his finger sandals on his feet, bring the fatted calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate, for the son of mine was dead, was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found. So they began to celebrate. The third story, although similar to the first two, demonstrates the extent to which the last are lost, and to the extent of God's grace. We're familiar with the idea of an inheritance granted to you after your parents, father, passes away. So to demand your share of inheritance before your parents have passed away, is in effect to say, You are dead to me now. We miss the extent of the offense that the Son commits to his father here. This is not just a unwise or rude or even scandalous thing that the son does. This is an act from what you cannot return, for which the son and this makes sense why the son later on is so concerned about the idea of returning to the Father. In effect, when he does this, he is saying I am out of the family now. There's no way for him to grant himself access back in the father though, gives him what he wants. There's a nice father. And of course the son leaves. Like many young people first out of the house, they go through an exciting city And he spends as if he has no cares in the world. He lives it up with food and friends until he runs out of cash. No cash means no friends. And to make matters worse when famine hits, no money, no friends, no food. So he takes the only job he can find feeding the pigs. Remember, these are all Jews that are talking to each other at the moment. Jews feeding pigs is not a desirable occupation. It's unclean to be around pigs. No self respecting Jew would touch a pig, let alone feed them, let alone consider eating the same food as them. How many rungs on the ladder is this son? Very low. But he says aha after so many days, he thinks no one in my father's house would starve like this, be this demeaned. If I go back, not as a son, okay, we've already crossed that bridge that's done. But as a servant, if I go back as a servant, then at least I wouldn't starve. So he prepares this little pitch. Have you ever done this, you're gonna go to a meeting or something, or you're gonna say, have some difficult conversation with your family member, and you stand in front of the mirror, and give you and give you a little psych up, you know, this is what I'm gonna say, this is how I'm gonna say it. So maybe you write it down is there's different ways of doing it. This is what he does. And and notice in his pitch, he acknowledges the gravity of his offense. I've sinned against heaven and against you. So I've done objectively wrong, but more than that, I've offended I've sinned against you father specifically. He only asked to be granted the smallest of mercy and grace to become a hired servant. Lower than an actual own servant of his father, the hired servant, we tend to think of owned servants as the lowest rung in their society, the hired servant is actually lower because the owned servant you as a Master needs to theoretically take care of them. Hired

servant, you can just be gone the next day. You don't have to hire them back the next day at all. So the lowest of lowest of rungs. He not as a privilege son, but as a slave, hired slave to earn his food. So he heads home, the text says his father sees them a long way off. It doesn't say this specifically, but I choose to interpret this to mean that the father was waiting for him. Perhaps he went out daily. Maybe there was a little hill you could see the lane way you could look down and see if somebody's coming up. I don't know that that's extrapolation. But he was waiting for him. He saw him a long way off The father doesn't wait for the son to come to him. He runs to the son. The son tries to get his speech out. But the father's too busy hugging him and kissing him. And the son before the son can object the father orders the best robe to be bought for his son. Give him status of son- sonship back. A ring, sandals. And then what happens just like the first two stories party, the father has the fattened calf cooked up, it's expensive, and then all party it up rejoicing that the son who was lost is now found.

So we've asked the question, what does it mean to be lost? Now, what does it mean? What does How much does God care about rescuing the lost For each of these stories speak to the desire that God has for the lost. It's one out of 100 he goes looking if it's one out of 10 he searches carefully using resources to find it. If it's one out of two, who rejects him in the most offensive way possible to his face, then when that one makes any effort at all, he welcomes him not only back into His presence, but back into his family. The first point from these three stories is how much God wants the lost back in his family. And there is nothing we could do or have done or will do, that can prevent us from being back in his family, if we choose. So each of these stories ramp up the offense. The last one being if we had God right in our presence, and we told him in no uncertain terms, how terrible we think he is. He would still welcome us back. If you don't get anything else, highlight and write that down.

There's another story though. Or if you've heard this before, this is from the, the famous author, known as unknown. So take that with a grain of salt. You may have heard it before. I think it's fairly well known. There was a man named George Thomas, a pastor in a small New England town. One Easter morning he came to the church carrying a rusty old birdcage. And he set it by the pulpit, several eyebrows were raised and as a response, he began to speak. I was walking through town yesterday, and when I saw a young boy coming towards me swinging this bird cage. On the bottom of the cage were three little wild birds, shivering with cold and fright. I stopped the lad and said, What do you got there, son? Just some old birds came to reply. What are you going to do with them? I asked. take them home, have fun with him. He answered. I'm gonna pull them, tease them pull up their feathers. Make them fight. I'm gonna have a real good time. But you'll get tired of those birds sooner or later than what? Oh, I got some cats said the little boy. They'll like birds. Take them to them. Pastor was silent for a moment and how much you want for those little birds. Huh? Why you don't want them birds mister. They're just old plain field birds. They don't sing they ain't even pretty, how much the pastor said. The boy sized up the pastor the pastor, as if he was crazy, and maybe a little bit if he had an opportunity, said \$10. The pastor reached to his pocket, gave him a \$10 bill placed it in the boy's hand and in a flash. The boy was gone surely he didn't want to look fortune too closely in the face. Pastor picked up the cage and gently carried it to the end of the alley where the tree is a tree in the grassy spot. Setting the cage down he opened the door and softly tapped the Birds tap the bars persuading the birds to come out. Well that explain the empty birds cage. And the pastor began to tell a different story. One day Satan and Jesus were having a conversation Satan had just come from the Garden of Eden, where he was gloating and boasting. Yes, sir, I have caught the world full of people down there, sent me a trap, used bait. They couldn't resist. I got 'em. Jesus said, What are you going to do with them? Satan replied, oh, I'm going to have fun. I'm

going to teach them how to hate and abuse each other. I'm going to teach them how to invent guns, bombs and kill each other. I'm just gonna have a great time. And what will you do when you get done with them? Jesus asked. Oh, I'll kill them. Jesus glared. How much - uh, Satan glared. How much do you want for them? Jesus asked. Oh, you don't want these people? They ain't no good. Why you'll take them they'll just hate you. They'll spit on you, they'll curse you. They'll even kill you. You don't want these people? How much Jesus asked again. Satan looked at Jesus and sneered all your tears, all your blood. Jesus said, done.

How far will God and Jesus go to rescue the lost? Jesus died on the cross for them? For us? How much do we care about the lost? How much time and energy and resources are we dedicating to find them? They're just they're disappearing beneath the waves around us daily. What would it look like to seek and find the lost with the same passion that God seeks and finds the lost in Luke 15? What would change in my life if I were to act on that passion? The story in Luke 15 isn't done though yet. Verses verse 25. Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. He came near the house he heard music and dancing. He called one of his servants and asked them what was going on his brother Your brother has come, they replied, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has him back safe and sound. The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him, but he answered his father, look, all of these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeying your orders. Yet you never gave me a young goat so that I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fatted calf for him. My son the father said, You are always with me and Everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.

The problem here isn't only that we may not have enough passion or dedication to seek and find the lost but also I may stop you from doing so. The younger son has returned home The party is started. The older brother sees the commotion finds out why is very upset. The older son who has watched his younger brother commit terrible sins, disgraced his family. I'm sure does coffee row exist in Southern Ontario? In Saskatchewan every morning of the week, including Sunday morning. There is some group of people who meet for coffee somewhere in town. And it starts at 6am. And it ends sometime in the afternoon. So depending on who you are, you go to a different group and have your coffee. It's called coffee row. I don't know if that's a I left before I became a coffee drinker. I was forced to if you have conversations with people, you have to have coffee, it's just a rule. But I'm sure at coffee row, the older brother had to endure the hushed tones of people saying Oh, do you know that family they're the ones with that Son, did you know what he did? The shame would have been present. So now he's being asked to welcome this good for nothing brother back. I mean, shouldn't this brother be punished? Shouldn't this brother worry at least thrown out not allowed back. I mean, that should be the fair thing to do. But as father comes and urges him and says no, come to the party, brother says the older brother says, That's not fair. And his father says fairness isn't the point. They have their family back again. And that alone is reason to celebrate. It's interesting that we don't have an ending here. Some modern TV shows, you know, you know the term break the fourth wall sort of thing. You know, you turn the camera and kind of make some point or talk to the camera that this is almost as if Jesus and His story is turning the camera on directly looking at us here. What are we going to do when God rescues a lost soul and brings him to us or them to us. Are we going to complain? Or are we going to rejoice? Like the older son we could focus more on some imagined standard of fairness, or like the father be so happy that a family member has returned that we cannot help but celebrate. It's like an elder's wife that told me once in a

very, very far place. Wait, nobody knows about that they had too many new people at their church. It was just too hard to remember them all too hard to get to know them all. We could do with not too many more new for a while. Or gentlemen, disheveled unkempt who slipped in the back of a church building and sat in the back Pew one Sunday morning, just before service started, didn't say anything. But soon the assembled worshipers began to smell an unpleasant odor moving forward. As the heads turned, the murmurs began, it was evidence the source The order was this gentleman murmurs began aloud and something must be done. So the minister was sent back and gentlemen sat next to gentlemen. And they began to talk soon learned that he came from the hospital two doors down, was poor had a medical condition for which there was being kind of treated, which caused the stench to happen. He had nowhere else to go. And he thought that Sunday morning, maybe God could help. Story has a happy in a happy ending, because the worshipers quickly realize their error and they banded together that morning to get the support he needed.

Do we understand what it is to be lost?

Do we understand the desire and dedication that God has for the lost? Will we share that desire and dedication for the lost? Or will I sabotage God's effort to rescue the lost? This morning, I want to leave you with this challenge. May we leave this building this morning with a renewed passion to seek and find the lost with God's help under his direction. And when God should rescue someone we might be surprised about. We will rejoice with God, because another one of our family members has been found.

Adam Sandiford

Thanks for listening to this week's sermon. The Beamsville Church of Christ meets Sunday mornings at 4900 John Street, Beamsville, Ontario. We have classes for all ages at 9:30 and the worship service begins at 10:30. You can subscribe to podcasts through Apple podcasts, Google Play Music Store or your favorite podcast app. Just search for Beamsville. All our past sermons and more information about our congregation are available at beamsvillechurchofchrist.ca

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>