How does the Gospel challenge us to abandon our old expectations of the Kingdom of God?

Jesus came with a task to perform: to seek and to save that which was lost! (Luke 19:10)

Last Week

Pastor Tom spoke on the Prodigal Son... the Lost Son; a parable that is paired in Luke with the parables of the Lost Coin and the Lost Sheep. Each a parable of God seeking out that which was lost. Tom told us that these parables reflect God’s providential love and grace in our salvation, but also our willingness to be found. No coin can do anything in order to be saved. No coin can cry out I am under the couch... it cannot return to its master. Neither do sheep.

A sheep, which was found after being lost in the Australian wilderness for six years, was shorn for the first time in January of this year. Named Sheila, the sheep had been lost in dense forest near Hobart in Tasmania since 2010. It was rescued by local man who found it on the side of a road, unable to move because of the amount of wool in its fleece.

When the sheep was sheared its wool weighed at just over 21 kilograms (46 pounds), which fell short of the Australian fleece record, held by Chris the sheep, which was found last year. When Chris was shorn for perhaps the first time, his fleece yielded 40 kilograms (89 pounds) of wool — the equivalent of 30 sweaters — and shedding almost half his body weight. Also there was Shrek in 2004 that refused to go quietly...

No, not even sheep have a willingness to be found, and often neither do we. Sometimes we like Shrek have to be taken forcibly; sometimes we need to be broken in order to be saved.

Evident In Our Story

Our passage starts off normal enough... the original Greek simply says he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. But then a turn... And behold a woman... oh my gosh look...

What’s a woman doing in a synagogue on the Sabbath in with all the men? Surely men and women don’t worship together! And look at her; she’s bent over with an evil spirit! How scandalous!

For Those Science Minded – I am sure we could think up many alternatives for this woman’s condition... she could have had an injury,
or a debilitative disease like osteoporosis. But what the writer has in mind here is what is important. It is what the people of the town thought of her that matters. They saw her as an unclean woman, one with a spirit of infirmity. Not fit for polite society; she was no longer in.

Often in the time of Christ people thought that disease was caused by sin, as if to say that God was vengeful and was punishing the inflicted. In fact they thought that the person deserved the agony that they had to endure. People blamed the broken for their brokenness.

Do we not still do that today?

The woman suffered from a diminished social status as well as a bad back. But Jesus reminds them that she is yet a child of Abraham and designed for all dignity that the covenant could offer. He healed her by touching her. Remember that Rabbi’s at this time did not touch women for fear that they were unclean. And here God touches an unclean woman. Christ knew her infirmity; he knew her bad back, every part of it, he made her. And now he removed from her the spirit of weakness, and gave her a spirit of joy and she responded with praise and rejoicing fitting for the Sabbath. The Sabbath of a redeeming God!

The Synagogue Ruler’s Response

The synagogue ruler, indignant with Jesus clear healing, did not praise God, nor did he confront Jesus, but instead turned his ire toward the people by quoting scripture, by quoting the law. There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. He quotes Exodus 20:9 and Deuteronomy 5:13.

But he ignores the main point:

- **Genesis 2:3** that says God blessed the seventh day and made it Holy.
- **Isaiah 58** that speaks of loosing chains of injustice, to provide food for the hungry, and shelter for the homeless, and dedicating the Sabbath Day to the glory of God.
- **Micah 6:8** He has told you, O man, what is good; and what the Lord requires of you: but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?
- **John 5:17** God is always working... always working to redeem his people.

What do we do to redeem the broken & brokenhearted?
Do we like Christ seek and save that which has been lost?

Jesus rebukes the synagogue ruler... Is this daughter of Abraham of less importance than an ox or a donkey? Why not the Sabbath day to set a child of Abraham free from Satan’s bondage? Is not the Sabbath the very day when we should exert ourselves to do our utmost to destroy the works of the devil and glorify God?

Making it truly Holy unto the Lord?

A day of Redemption?

But these men remained unconvinced. They refused to repent. They were not broken, they were proud. Like the sheep Shrek, they refused to be found; they had hardened hearts. They were unwilling to be saved.

Are We Sometimes Like These Men?

Legalism is also a cause of spiritual weakness. It has the power to bend one over to the wrong way of thinking. It bends men's minds and prevents them from thinking straight. It enslaves.

In what ways do we keep people in bondage and deny them the release only gained by the gospel? Do we justify our behavior with quotations of scripture, judgments against the unrighteous, supported by quotations of the Law? Do we give ourselves a pass from our own sins with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but when it comes to acting out the Gospel towards someone else... do we shy away?

Are you willing to be found? Are you willing to allow the Gospel of Christ’s Kingdom permeate your whole heart? Christ said that the Kingdom of God was like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough. Has the Gospel worked through you? Has it changed you?

The Gospel is like changing and is works its way through us like yeast slowly changing us until we are a new creature. Are you letting that Gospel work? Or are you holding onto your old misconceptions?

I asked you in the beginning of this message: How does the Gospel challenge us to abandon our old expectations of the Kingdom of God?

Has the Gospel been worked into all of us? Has it changed us? Does it continue to challenge us to not be like these men who witnessed the healing of the crippled woman?
Do you know someone who is broken?

Maybe they have some socially unacceptable disease, like alcoholism, or another debilitating sin. Maybe they struggle with a social stigma that prevents them from getting the help they need.

Maybe deep down you also think they are unworthy of the Kingdom of God. Maybe unworthy even of this space... you would never bring them to church. How embarrassing. Maybe you justify your thoughts with the truth that it was their poor decisions that brought them to their current condition. Do you justify your feelings for them with clear proclamations of God’s Law – proclamations that even we cannot uphold completely? I ask you now to reflect on this passage and repent. Let that Gospel work into your heart as well.

I call you all now... all of you... no longer exclude the brokenhearted from your love!

*Sometimes we all need to be broken in order to be saved.*