

Sermon Notes on Mt. 3:1-11, Trinity III (note 1-11)

1. The parallel texts are found at Mk. 1:2-8; Lk. 3:3-17; Jn. 1:19-27. Also, Is. 40 ought be read in its entirety. It prophesies the Baptist. Later prophecies of John are found at Malachi 3:1a and 4:5-6. Malachi 3:1b-5 speaks of the Messiah. Lk. 1:5-25 contains the announcement of Gabriel to Zacharias. Vss. 15-17 describe the Baptist's role. After John was born, Zacharias sang of the coming Messiah, Lk. 1:68-75 and then of the role of John in vss. 76-79.
2. The Baptist was a preacher, a herald. He told people what God said. He said: "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is here." Jesus said the same thing. See Mt. 4:17. The first of Luther's 95 theses reads: "When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said: 'Repent ye' He meant that the whole life of a Christian should be one of repentance." Well said.
3. The description of John in vs. 4 reminds us of the words "not a money-lover" at I Tim. 3:3. Read also I Tim. 6:6-10. John was content with very little. It takes very little in this life for the person who trusts the Lord.
4. Vs. 5 tells us that the people came in droves from everywhere in Palestine to hear John the Baptist. Vs. 6 tells us that they were being baptized as they were confessing their sins. Lk. 3:3 says of John: "He went to all the country around the Jordan (River) preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." I Jn. 1:9 reads "If we confess our sins He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Confession of sins does not merit forgiveness but it is a necessary prerequisite for forgiveness of sins. An appetite does not feed us but it is a necessary prerequisite for eating.
5. Vss. 7-10 describe the impenitent sinners who came out to the Jordan. The Pharisees were self-righteous and felt that through their own power they could change from evil to good. Therefore, they felt no need for repentance. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection of the dead and a judgment. They were known for their moral looseness. They, too, felt no need for repentance. John calls both of them "children of snakes." They were poisoned with sin and impenitence. They did not bring forth the fruits which Christian faith produces. Faith without works is dead. John said to them: "Don't say 'We have Abraham as father.'" Read John 8:37-59. They thought that descent from Abraham was sufficient. But Jesus told them that not Abraham, but the devil, was their father. Abraham, of course, is the father of believers. See Rom. 4:11,12. But Abraham is not the father of impenitent Jews although they claim him as father. God can raise children to Abraham from stones. He can cause life where there is none. But these impenitent people cannot produce life. John says that the axe is already at the root of the tree. These dead trees, these dead people, are about to be cut off. Every dead, fruitless, person is about to be cut off and thrown into hell-fire.
6. In vs. 11 John is distinguishing between himself and Jesus. He is not distinguishing between two baptisms. Eph. 4:5 reads "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." In the Nicene Creed we confess: "I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins." At Jn. 1:31 John says that Jesus appeared to Israel because John came baptizing with water. Jesus came to people through John's baptism. It forgave sins. But John baptized Jews only. At Jn. 3:25-30 when John's disciples complained that Jesus' disciples baptized more than did John's disciples, John said: "He must increase but I must decrease." He was only Jesus' forerunner. At Jn. 4:1-3 Jesus left Judea because His disciples were baptizing more people than were John's disciples. Jesus did not want people to consider His baptism more valid than John's. The command at Mt. 28:19 is for all nations, Jews and Gentiles. Acts 19:5 does not say that people were baptized a second time. Read the whole passage. It is plain that their first baptism was not a valid one. Paul explained that John's baptism was a repentance baptism in the name of Jesus Christ.

Theme: HOW THE BAPTIST WORKED IN ISRAEL

Introduction: The Baptist is a model for us. He needed little so far as clothing, shelter and food is concerned. He was a voice in the wilderness. So are we. He preached only what God says. So should we. He baptized for the forgiveness of sins. So should we. He forgave repentant sinners and refused to forgive impenitent sinners. So should we.

I-HOW HE DEALT WITH THE REPENTANT IN ISRAEL

- A-Vss. 5-6 describe these people for us. It says "They were being baptized, confessing their sins." John said at Jn. 1:31: "In order that Jesus might be shown to Israel, for this reason I came baptizing with water." The water baptism of the Baptist revealed Jesus to Israel. Paul said at Acts 19:4: "John baptized a repentance baptism telling the people to believe in the One Who was to come, namely, Jesus." I Jn. 1:9 reads "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." How does God love the world? By offering forgiveness of sins. He offers it free of charge, without works, without merits and worthiness.
- B-It is the same with us today. We baptize our babies. We baptize adults after they are given instruction. Every Sunday we forgive people their sins in the absolution. The forgiveness of sins is the life-blood of the church.

II-HOW HE DEALT WITH THE IMPENITENT IN ISRAEL

John evidently refused to baptize the impenitent Israelites who plainly came only to make themselves look good. They were hypocrites.

- A-How John describes them. He calls them "children of snakes." They were full of the poison of impenitence, of self-righteousness, of moral laxness. There could be no faith in their hearts. He asked them: "Who showed you to escape from the wrath to come?" No one had told them about the judgment which was to go against them because of their unforgiven sin and fruitless life. He tells them that they should make fruit in keeping with repentance. When people repent and believe they become fruitful as Jesus says in Jn. 15. They are branches on Jesus, the Vine. But these Pharisees and Sadducees bear no fruits in keeping with repentance. Furthermore John tells them to quit calling Abraham their Father. Read John 8:30-59. The Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. The Jews said: "Abraham is our father. That is enough." Jesus answers: "If you were Abraham's sons, you would do the deeds of Abraham." Abraham believed in Jesus. They did not. Jesus tells them that the devil is their father. They tried to kill Him. John tells the Pharisees and Sadducees that God can raise up children from stones if He wants to. These people are as dead as stones. Only God can convert and save them. But they refused.

- B-John warns them of what is to come. John says: "Already the axe is laid at the root of the tree. Therefore, every tree which does not produce good fruit is cut off and thrown into the fire." In the final judgment the fruitless among men will be thrown into hell. Read Mt. 25:41-46. Those who did not produce good works will go away into everlasting punishment. Fruits do not produce a tree but a good tree produces fruits. Works do not save a man but a believing man produces good works. Luther said: "Faith alone saves but faith is never alone."

At Gal. 5:6 Paul says that what counts is faith which is active in love. The Bible says many times that we are saved alone by God's grace through <sup>faith</sup> but such a faith is productive in doing good works.

Conclusion: John gives all glory to Jesus in vs. 11. He says that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Baptism, for Jesus' sake, gives us the Holy Spirit Who cleanses our heart from sin.

Sermon Notes on Lk. 15:1-10, Trinity III

1. Lk. 14 ends with Jesus saying: "Let the one who has ears be hearing." Someone has said: "God put ears on sinners so that they would listen." Lk. 15 begins with those who were hearing and those not hearing.
2. The tax-collectors and sinners (likely harlots) were outcasts in Israel. The Pharisees and scribes avoided them and would not even eat with them. "This man welcomes and eats with them (sinners)" is a high compliment to Jesus but it was the cause of the grumbling of the Pharisees and scribes. The sinners were repenting and hearing. The Pharisees and scribes refused to hear and repent. But Jesus spoke the three parables of this chapter because He loved His enemies too and wanted to bring them to repentance.
3. There are three parables in this chapter: Vss. 3-7, 8-10 and 11-32. All three have two words in common: "lost" and "found". Both words describe what has already happened to the tax-collectors and sinners. The word "lost" describes the true condition of Pharisees and scribes but they have not yet been found because they refuse to repent.
4. Vss. 7 and 10 tell us that the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner repents. Scripture mentions the rejoicing of the angels three times: at creation, Job 38:7; when Christ was born, Lk. 2:13-14; and when one sinner repents, Lk. 15:7,10.
5. Vs. 1 speaks about "all the tax-collectors and sinners". That very likely means that they came in large numbers. In vs. 3 the antecedent of "them" must be the Pharisees and scribes.
6. The expressions "what man" in vs. 4 and "what woman" in vs. 8 naturally cause us to answer: "Every one would do that." These parables are axioms, truths which are invariably true. They are illustrations to which Jesus' enemies had to say: "Everyone would do that" thereby admitting that Jesus was true in what He said and did. It is a masterful way to preach and teach. He loved them too.
7. The owner of the sheep was more concerned about the one lost sheep than over the ninety-nine seemingly safe sheep, braved the wilderness to find it, was gentle to it when he found it and even asked his neighbors and friends to rejoice with him. That goes far beyond what usually happens. Likewise, the care, work and industry of the woman seeking her lost coin and calling her friends together goes far beyond what usually happens. But it pictures Jesus' love for lost sinners. And our love for Him should make us realize that we are debtors to all people, obligated to them, to bring them to repentance and faith. That's what Paul meant at Rom. 1:14. Jesus' love for lost mankind should be our love for lost mankind.
8. There are two schools of thought over the meaning of the end of vs. 7. Some commentators think that the ninety-nine represent those who have already repented and therefore are safe. Others think that the ninety-nine represent those, like the Pharisees, who refuse to repent. But you can teach this text without deciding that matter. Because the stress in both vss. 7 and 10 is on the one sinner who repents. Keep your eyes on that and you will teach the text correctly.
9. The first of Luther's 95 theses reads: "When our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, said 'Repent ye' He meant that the whole life of the Christian should be one of repentance." The Christian's primary need is to confess his sins and receive absolution. That is a constant need. That's why we have confession and absolution in church services. These three parables are necessary for me until I close my eyes in death.
10. Jesus said: "The Son of man came to seek and save the lost." Lk. 19:10  
I did not seek Him. He sought me. I did not find Him. He found me.  
I did not save myself. He did that.
11. A Jewish proverb said: "There is joy before God when those who provoke Him perish." But Jesus said: "There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

## Sermon Outline on Lk. 15:1-10, Trinity III

Theme: LOST, SOUGHT AND FOUND

Introduction: The three parables in Lk. 15 have been called one of the loveliest chapters in the Bible because they picture the true God Who wants all men to be saved. Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost, all people. Some refuse Him. Some accept Him. But He truly seeks all.

### I-THE LOST ARE SOUGHT

- A-The condition of the lost. There are three parables in this chapter. All three have the word "lost" in common. The sheep was lost, vs. 4. The coin was lost, vs. 8. The son was lost, vs. 32. This is a picture of all of mankind. Rom. 5:12 tells us that through one man, Adam, sin entered into the world and in this way death came upon all people. This reminds us of the story of the fall of man. Gen. 2:17; 3:19. Rom. 3:23 tells us that all men have sinned and therefore lack the glory and approval of God. All of mankind is as helpless, weak and hopeless as the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. All people by nature are spiritually dead in their sins. Eph. 2:1. Until people are found they are God's enemies as was the Apostle Paul. Until they are found they are spiritually ignorant like Nicodemus. Jn. 3.
- B-But the Lord eagerly seeks them. The shepherd zealously looked for the lost sheep, vs. 4 of our text. The woman zealously sought her coin, vs. 8. The father longed for his son, vs. 20. These are pictures of the great love of God for lost mankind. He sought Zacchaeus. Lk. 19:10. All the tax-collectors and sinners came to hear Him, vs. 1 of our text. Before He ascended He told His disciples to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8. He told all of us to baptize and teach all nations. Mt. 28:19. Christians are obligated to seek the lost in this world. Rom. 1:14-15. For 2000 years Jesus' missionaries have been seeking the lost as did the shepherd, the woman and the father.

### II-THE LOST ARE FOUND UNLESS THEY REJECT THE SEEKER

- A-The lost are found. There are many examples in the NT: Nicodemus, Jn. 3:1; 7:50; 19:39. The twelve disciples. The Apostle Paul, I Tim. 1:12-17. The conversions on Pentecost Day, Acts 2:41. The jailor at Philippi, Acts 16:30-34. Many more examples could be cited. The story of the church is one long account of thousands of conversions. Think of the Reformation in Germany 500 years ago and how this has affected the world. Think of how the Bible has been spread throughout the former USSR and that many people have become Christians. Our text says twice: "There is joy in the presence of the heavenly angels over one sinner who repents." There is much joy in heaven over what is happening in the Kingdom of God on earth.
- B-But man can reject this seeking. vs. 2 of our text says: "But the Pharisees and scribes began to grumble by saying 'This man welcomes sinners and even eats with them'." God's act of love in seeking the sinners only caused His enemies to complain. They did this throughout His life on earth. They even crucified Him. The majority of the Jews still reject Jesus and the way of salvation. The lost sinner cannot find Jesus himself as our text shows us but lost sinners can reject the seeking Savior as our text also shows us.

Conclusion: In the third parable of Lk. 15 the father speaks to the son who was still lost, vs. 25-32. The lost son was jealous of the son who was found. He resented the love of the father for the lost son. But the father continued to plead with this second son. And so it is today. Just as the sun shines on all and the rain and snow fall on all so the Love of God in Christ still calls out to all men: "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved. He who believes not shall be damned."