

**Pentecost 17**  
**“God’s Power To Change Your Life”**  
**Luke 15:1-10**

*Jesus said, “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?”*

With all of the rainy weather that we had a few weeks ago, some unwelcome critters have made it into our neighborhood. We don’t get to visit with our nextdoor neighbor very often, but this weekend we were outside. She told us that she had just gone outside and found snakes on her patio. I hate snakes, rats, mice... and so I asked her, “Did you take care of it?” What I meant was, “Did you chop its head off?” She looked at me and said, “No, I just chased them right into your yard.”

This weekend, I was smoking some meat. I hadn’t used the smoker for quite a while, and I just leave it outside in rain, snow, whatever. When I opened up the lid of the smoker, a frog hopped out. But THEN I noticed a frog in the bowl of the smoker. (There’s a bowl that catches the drippings from the meat I’m smoking.) I tried to scare the frog out, and then I realized he was stuck to the bowl. Somewhere along the line, I smoked this frog. I finally pried the frog loose, flung him over on our deck. Next thing you know, he hops away. I am so ready for winter, when all the reptiles leave me alone.

When I watch the frog hop away, I started thinking about the time when frogs are mentioned in the Bible. I’ll bet you remember the story. In Exodus 8, it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> plague, when God sent Moses to set His people free from slavery in Egypt, and Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, so Moses brought 10 plagues on the land. The 2<sup>nd</sup> plague was frogs. Frogs everywhere. Frogs in the crops, in the house, in the clothes, in the food, everywhere. Finally, Pharaoh, OK, God’s people can go free, just get rid of these frogs.

And that's when Moses asked Pharaoh a very interesting question. Moses asked, "When do you want God to remove these frogs?" And do you know what Pharaoh said, "Tomorrow." How about tomorrow?

Now if your house, your food, your clothes, your bed was filled with frogs, why wait until tomorrow. Why not do something about it right now? It would be a chance to improve society, health, life? Why wait until tomorrow?

But we do that all of the time! We procrastinate on important things that we need to take care of, we put off having that important conversation, we fail to make the changes that would be a blessing to ourselves and to others. Why do we do that?

Maybe we are **complacent**, way too comfortable in situations, even situations that are not God-pleasing. Maybe we are **afraid, afraid** that a change will be hard. Maybe we are **too proud** to admit that something needs to be done right now, not tomorrow.

In our Gospel reading we hear about the sense of urgency we need when it comes to finding the lost, making necessary changes that impact our faith, when it comes to overseeing the people in our lives that we love.

In the story, a man loses a sheep. There were still 99 more sheep, plenty of sheep. What does the shepherd do? Does he say "You win one, you lose one. Maybe I'll go look for the sheep **tomorrow**?" NO, he leaves the 99 sheep and he goes and looks for the one that is lost. And when he finds that only lost sheep, he carries it back on his shoulders. And then he calls his friends and says, "Let's have a party. For the lost has been found." And we're told that all of heaven rejoices when someone comes to repentance, receives Jesus' love and forgiveness. That's because Jesus cares about

every single one of us. He cares about every single challenge that we face. And we know that He does, because He died on the cross for our sins.

And in the story of the lost coin. The woman still has 9 other coins. What does the woman do? Does she say, “No big deal. Maybe I’ll look for the coin **tomorrow?**” NO. She gets to work. She lights the lamp. She sweeps the floor. She searches until she finds the lost coin. And when she finds it, she calls her friends and say, “Let’s have a party. The lost is found.” And we are told all heaven rejoices when someone comes to repentance and knows Jesus’ love and forgiveness. That’s because Jesus cares about every single one of us, and he cares about every single challenge that we face. We know that, because He died on the cross for us.

Today’s sermon is for all of us. May be you know someone who is lost. Maybe it’s your kid or grandchild. Don’t wait until tomorrow. I’m going to give you God’s powerful words to share with your loved one who is lost.

Or perhaps you feel a need to make a change in your life, whatever that change might be. Maybe the Lord is leading you in a new direction. Maybe something in your life is getting in the way of your witness. I’m going to share God’s Word that will empower you move forward.

And there is a verse from Scripture that is going to show us the way. The verse is Philippians 3:10 “**ST. Paul writes, “I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection.”** The word power occurs 57 times in the New Testament. And this word is used to describe the most powerful event that has ever happened, the event that separated BC from AD – the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And this **resurrection power**

available to change the heart of those who are lost, to change our hearts, to change things TODAY... NOT TOMORROW.

The Greek word for power is our word for dynamite. The power God gives you is dynamite power. The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead 2000 years ago is available to us right now. It is God's power that finds the lost and brings them home. It's God's power that changes our lives for the better. How?

**The resurrection power of Christ is the power that cancels our past.** Every failure, every mistake, every sin, every regret is forgiven in the blood of Jesus. So many people that you meet wish that they could start over. They wish that they could undo choices that they've made. And some people hang on so tightly to the past that they simply won't let go. "If only this..." "If only that..."

The Lord says we don't have to carry that load, a load of old hurts/bad memories. He says in Colossians 2:13-14, "**You were dead in your sins. But God made you alive in Christ. Your sins are forgiven.**" Jesus Christ knows all of things we've done. And He doesn't rub them in ... He rubs them out. He did not come to condemn us ... He came to change us. Jeremiah 31 even promises that God **remembers our sins no more.**

Someone put it this way. God takes our forgiven sins and throws them into the deepest part of the ocean, and He puts up a sign that says, "No Fishing." He does not want us to dredge up our sinful past. It is forgiven in the blood of Jesus. The resurrection power of Jesus CANCELS OUR PAST. And someone you know who is lost needs to hear this words... today, not tomorrow.

**The Resurrection power of Christ Conquers our Problems.** Let me fill you in on something. Everyone has a problem. It's part of living in a fallen world. The real problem is what to do with these problems. Are we going to try and solve them by our own strength, with our own power? You know you are trying to go it alone when you are tired all of the time. Your power is not sufficient.

The secret is to take your focus off of your problems and focus instead on God's promises. How do we know that Christ conquers our problems? Romans 8:35 says, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... NO. In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”**

No matter how dark a situation may be, God can turn it around. No matter how hopeless life may seem, God brings hope. The same power that raised Christ from the dead lifts us up above the challenges of this world and makes us God-focused. God may not resolve the issue immediately, but He empowers us to face it in His strength.

2 Corinthians 5:17 ... “if anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation.”

Romans 12:2 ... “Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold. But be transformed by the renewal of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is...”

His resurrection power will change your heart, so that you can better follow His will. You have someone who is lost and needs these words, or if any of us have a change that needs to be made... Share it today, don't put it off until tomorrow.

This change of heart is a change that all of us need to make. But it's not our power. It's the resurrection power of Jesus.