

Searching

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon 'Searching' explores God's relentless pursuit of the lost and the joy of repentance through the parables of Jesus.

Duration: 35:56

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 15:1-2, Luke 15:4-7, Luke 15:11-16, Luke 15:23-24, Luke 15:32

Topics: "Searching"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells the story of the prodigal son from the Bible. The younger son asks his father for his share of the inheritance and goes off to a distant country where he squanders all his wealth in wild living. A severe famine hits the land, and the son finds himself in need and working in a pig field. He realizes his mistake and decides to return to his father, confessing his sins and asking to be treated as a hired servant. However, the father, filled with compassion, welcomes him back with open arms and celebrates his return. The preacher emphasizes the importance of recognizing our mistakes and turning back to God, highlighting the father's unconditional love and forgiveness in the story.

Transcript

We've been seeing that, in the book of Luke, that Jesus' revelation of who God really is, because he was Emmanuel, God in the flesh, totally blew away the minds of the religious establishment. It just so happens, historically, that just as the Jewish leadership had twisted and turned religion backwards, away from God's intent, so it is even today. It's very easy for us, meeting even in the name of the Lord, to be twisting and falling away from God's heart, his original intention.

We get religion instead of Jesus. We get religiosity, rather than an understanding of who the Lord is. Nowhere did Jesus explode people's concepts of religion, especially the Pharisees and Sadducees, than when he told these parables, which are found in Luke 15.

One of the most famous chapters in the Bible, and we read it this week. Let's look at it. Now, the tax collectors and sinners, notorious sinners, those who weren't practicing Judaism the way they should have, were all gathering around to hear Jesus.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, this man welcomes sinners and he eats with them. He hangs out with low-life people. Then Jesus told them this parable.

Suppose one of you has 100 sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the 99 and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his 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 that in the same way, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents, turns around, moves toward God, than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent. Or suppose a woman has 10 silver coins and loses one.

Doesn't 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 lost coin. In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Always remember in the Bible, Old and New Testament, when there's a repetition of a phrase or a word, it's done for emphasis. So the repetition of a phrase is done for emphasis. Jesus continued, there was a man who had two sons.

This is maybe the best short story ever written. The younger one said to his father, father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them and not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

After he had spent everything, ah, what a bummer. There was a severe famine in that whole country and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country who sent him to his fields to feed pigs, which was against the law if you were a Jew.

He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. And when he came to his senses, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have food to spare and here I'm starving to death. I'll set out and go back to my father and say to him, father, I've sinned against heaven and against you.

I'm no longer worthy to be called 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 and he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

The son said to him, father, I've sinned against heaven and against you, I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, quick, bring the best robe, put it on him, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it.

Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again. He was lost and is found.

So they began to celebrate. We're gonna leave off the part about the other brother who was a trip, right? And who wasn't very happy about his younger brother coming. When you read scriptures, and by the way, as you're reading through that New Testament or you get one today, the passage, the verses are not listed like in a normal Bible, but they're on the bottom vaguely, just what is covered on that page.

So when you find where the chapter begins, it's always at the beginning of a paragraph. You find where that chapter begins and then where that chapter ends, like tomorrow or today, 18, tomorrow, 19. So you find out where 19 probably begins and where it ends and that's what you're reading is.

And someone told me they're doing what I suggested, they have a pencil or a pen with them and they're writing all kinds of notes or questions or comments that come to their mind in the margin because that's a good way to study the Bible. I also recommend this, read the chapter twice because the first reading, you'll get familiar with what's going on when you read it the second time and it's short, it's two pages. Some of them are gonna be less than a page as we move through.

Some chapters are very short. As you read through it, read it a second time and then meditate on it. What does meditate mean? It comes from the word in the Bible means to chew.

So you chew on it, you think about it, you picture it. You have to use your imagination when you read the Bible. You gotta see that shepherd going out for the sheep.

You gotta imagine what the weather might be, cold, windy, you gotta understand there's predators out there that could eat up that one member of the flock. You have to use your imagination as you read the Bible, not going beyond scripture but putting a picture to it from the words of God's word. Also important is the context.

Jesus, did he just tell three parables? No. These three parables were told because of a criticism he was getting. See that first two, verse or two, is the key to the whole chapter.

He was eating with publicans, tax collectors, who were despised and who usually were socking it to the people and making extra money on their own and to notorious sinners. That meant all kinds of people but definitely they were on the wrong side of the righteousness line set by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. As he was hanging out and eating with these people and loving them and talking to them, then you gotta imagine in your mind, look, my mind just had a picture of him eating with them and who knows what they're saying, what curse words they're saying.

Who knows some of the nonsense they're talking and he's at the table. He didn't get up and say, what's wrong with you all? He endured it. While he's doing that, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law are watching this all and they're saying, how could this be a religious leader? Because their concept of a religion was obliterate these sinners.

Don't save these sinners, wipe them out. And don't contaminate yourself by being with them. If you're really holy, you don't hang out with people like that.

You don't eat with people like that. That was the religion of Orthodox Judaism back then. You stay away.

Now, we know what Jews thought of Gentiles and Gentiles thought of the Jews because anti-Semitism is older than dirt, but the Jews had no use for Gentiles. They had a teaching from some of the rabbis back then. If you see a Gentile woman giving birth, don't help her if she's on the road because you're only bringing another Gentile into the world.

You know what they felt about Samaritans, and again, vice versa, the Samaritans hated them. They hated the Samaritans as a half-breed of people even though they lived in the same land. But it went deeper than that.

The rabbis and the leaders of the Pharisees had a concept or a term that they called people of the land. People of the land were people who weren't Orthodox, weren't practicing Judaism as the Pharisees and the teachers of the law prescribed. They were called people of the land, and the rabbis wrote back then,

you don't lend them money, you don't let them handle money, you don't take a trip with them, and you try to avoid doing business with them.

None of their testimony can be accepted in a court of law. Why? Because their low lives, they're not practicing Judaism the way we say you're supposed to. So Jesus eating with these people and hanging with them was like, oh, he's very mere.

I mean, it was like, what are you doing? You can't be a religious leader. It was in that setting that Jesus then said, let me tell you three stories. And in these stories, he's showing that God rejoices in finding people who are lost, not in punishing them.

You can be religious and have a vicious heart where you want to hurt people because they're sinning and they blaspheme God. The whole spirit of what happened in Paris is the opposite of the spirit of Jesus. People who curse Jesus, we don't want to kill them, we want to see them get saved, amen? But that's hard, that's why that amen was so weak.

It's hard for us to have that in our hearts because people who live counter to the Bible and make fun of Jesus, unless God works in your heart, you want very little to do with them. And this is the whole point of these parables is that Jesus looked at people different than the religious leaders did. And he's God, so this tells us about God's heart.

What do we learn about God's heart? Well, a shepherd had 100 sheep, but one strayed away and there were 99 left. And now we get a revelation about God, which no one had back then. God looks for lost people.

The shepherd went looking for the lost sheep. The concept back then was if you're a loser and a sinner and you've messed up, if you come begging to God and you do penance and you humble yourself and all of that, maybe God will accept you. But no, Jesus is saying no, before you come, he's looking for you.

He's going out looking for the lost sheep. This was a totally different concept. Don't you remember that the reason you're here today and I'm here is not that you came to Jesus, that he went looking for you.

Am I right or wrong? How does he look for us? Through a dream, through a conscience, a pang of conscience, through a song we once heard, someone sharing the gospel. He goes looking for us. This was unheard of, and today we need it because we can get judgmental in our religion and just wanna pound people.

The Bible tells us that the shepherd had to count the 99. See, this is the true heart of a shepherd. A pastor has to have this kind of heart.

It's not who's in church today. It's who's not in church today that I'm supposed to be thinking about. I'm thinking of people right now who once came here and were serving the Lord and not, and when you have a shepherd's heart and you think like God, you just don't go, oh, look how many people are here today.

Look at all the new members. How about the folks that aren't? Not just who's in the choir, who used to sing in the choir and is now wasting their life away from God because that's how God thinks. The shepherd counted the 99 and he said, I'm not gonna rejoice that there's 99.

I'm gonna go out for the one who's not here. That's the picture of God's heart. He goes after the one who's not there.

So the shepherd went out to look for the lost sheep. How'd the sheep get lost? Let me hurry through this. How did the sheep get lost? He wandered.

There's three cases of being lost, a lost son, a lost coin, a lost sheep. How did the sheep get lost? He just wandered. You can get in a lot of trouble just wandering.

How did the sheep wander? Well, sheep are not that bright and shepherds have a tough time in Israel because it's only in the middle of the country there's a small sliver, relatively speaking, of where there's good grazing ground for sheep, for a flock of sheep. If you go to the right, to the east, as you look at a map, you're gonna go toward the Dead Sea, toward the Jordan River, and things get desert-like there. It's not so good going over to the Mediterranean.

But in the middle, there's some beautiful grazing ground. So the shepherds had to watch those sheep. The shepherds not only took care of the flock of sheep owned by Adia, let's say, but they also were shepherds for a community.

In other words, the town owned a flock of sheep. That was very important to the town. And the shepherds were hired by the town.

You take care of our community's sheep. And when they came back at the end of the day and the shepherds came back and one shepherd was missing, everybody knew he's out searching for one lost sheep. Why'd the sheep get lost? Because he sees a tuft of grass and he eats it and he likes it.

And then he sees another tuft over there and then he eats there. He's not thinking where he belongs. He's not thinking what's over there, that there's safety and there's danger.

He doesn't know that. All he knows is I can bite something that tastes good. Isn't that a picture of humanity? How many of us have gotten in trouble in life just because it tastes good? We don't know where we're going.

There's the next piece is over here. And then over here, the next thing you know, we're way down on the BQE. Looking, yeah, the BQE is that way, isn't it? Yeah.

And now we're in trouble. Why, what did we do? We didn't set out to get in trouble. We just wandered.

All you have to do is wander. You get in a lot of trouble. The shepherd now has to go out and find that lost sheep.

There's predators out there. There's animals that will love to just eat that sheep. And the shepherd has to go out there with nothing but a staff, fight off anything, want just to get the lost sheep.

And then Jesus says, and when he brings the lost sheep home, there's more rejoicing in that town. He puts them on his back and the whole town, let's say, is clapping and high-fiving. Why? Because the shepherd found the lost sheep.

So Jesus is saying, you want to judge people. You want to kill the one who wanders and say, you're so stupid. What are you wandering for? What are you messing around with drugs? What are you taking up

with pornography for? What are you, stupid? Jesus doesn't look that way.

He sees someone wandering. He sees someone's going to be destroyed and he's going to go after that person. And how many religious people who are called Christians and preachers know nothing of God's heart when it comes to going after lost sheep? They just want to judge them.

Circle the wagons. We're the righteous ones and the people out there, look what's happening to the country. Look what's happening here.

And they're going to legalize this and legalize that. What kind of leaders we have? What kind of Congress? What kind of White House? What kind of whatever? But that's not going to bring anybody back. You have to go after the person.

The shepherd couldn't just say a word. He had to go out, took effort, took work. Then there was a woman who had 10 coins, silver coins.

They were called drachmas. And one of them was worth a day's wage. So she had 10 of them and she lost them.

How'd she lose it? It was easy back then. In the typical poor person's house, which Jesus was relating to, there was just one window and it was about 18 inches wide and wasn't that big. And the floor was beaten down dirt.

And then they would take flat plant growth and put it down to keep the dust down. So it was a mixture of dirt and some leaves on the floor. So if a coin was knocked off and it went there, how would you find it? It was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

How would you possibly get it? It's on the dirt in the middle of the leaves. It's only this big. But she went searching for it.

And then she so rejoiced, Jesus said, when she found it. And she said, he's saying now some people are like lost coins. What's the significance of that? As I bring this to a close, is you can be lost in the house.

You know, a sheep went out in the wilderness. The sheep got in trouble, but you can be right in the house and get lost. Just think all over America today, people gathering at 11 o'clock to go to church and some of them are right in the house singing in the choir and they're lost.

They don't know Jesus. You can be lost right in the house. You can be lost right close to it all.

You can be in a gospel singing group. We were thinking about that at the funeral on Thursday in Nashville. You know, you can be saying things that don't mean anything anymore in your heart.

You can be swaying with the choir and then living during the week. You're lost right in the house. There's no change, there's no, Jesus has lost his preciousness.

The other thing about a coin is someone had to knock that coin down. Coins don't move on their own like a sheep or a person. And that speaks to us about the fact that some people get in trouble because somebody moved them and hurt them.

Somebody did something, led them into sin, molested them, tempted them, spoiled them, messed with their mind, was brutal with them, and injected them with their own brutal spirit. And Jesus said that when she found that coin, she rejoiced. You can be lost right in the house.

You can be familiar with the things of God. I tell everyone who works here, the security people, as the pastor, everyone who oversees ministries here, BT Kids, security, they're killing themselves across the street with our children. You know that, right, at nine and 12.

But I always ask to the leadership, what service are they in? The ushers, what service do they sit in? I'm not talking about working. What service do they sit in and receive from the Lord? I don't care who guards me and all of that, and the pastors and security and all of that. What service do they sit in? Because you can be working in the church and get lost.

We had someone many years ago, 20-something years ago, who was ushering in our previous facility, and he went back to shooting mainline heroin while he was ushering. He helped count the money, and he was doing heroin. Why? Busy, right in the house, but lost.

Lastly, the famous story about the prodigal son. The Jewish law said that if there's two sons, the older son gets 2 3rds of the inheritance, the younger son gets a third. You usually waited until the father died or had retired, out of respect.

You stay with him, help him, and then you get your third or 2 3rds. Some got it early, but there's a little sassiness to this story because it's like the younger son is saying, I'm not waiting for you to die. I have no time for that.

Just give me the money. Show me the money. I want the money.

I want my money. And notice this. This parable is called the parable of the prodigal.

What's a parable? It's a story with a spiritual truth that it's illustrating. Can't be taken always literal in every part to try to apply it to something, but there's general truths in it. So this parable really could be called the parable of a godly father because the hero of this story is not the son.

Who's the hero of this story? It's the father. And notice the father let him have the money. Sometimes you realize that your children or people have to learn by their own mistakes.

There's no other lesson they're gonna have to learn. They're gonna have to do it and get to the end of themselves. I've had people over the years tell me, no, you're trying to control my life.

I don't wanna be a no-cult. Don't be giving me those verses and all of that and all that. I say, you know what? You go out and do what you have to do because I can see now you're not open to God's truth.

You might call me from Rikers. You might call me from wherever, but I'm just gonna pray God will get you to the end of yourself where you'll listen. He wouldn't have listened.

He didn't listen. So he got his money and he went on his way. He goes out and he's got a whole posse.

You know, when you got some money, you got a posse. Am I right or wrong? Yeah, and he's out there and they're just partying. Heineken, Bud Light, whatever you want.

We're gonna get it to you. And then guess what? His money runs out. There's always the chance your money can run out.

And then, what a bummer. Can you believe this? You know, mama said there'd be days like this. He runs out of money and at the same time he runs out of money, there's a famine in the land.

That's a double whammy. Your money runs out and now there's a famine in the land. The economy goes sideways.

He's gotta get a job somewhere. So against all his religious training as a Jew, he's now feeding pigs. Pigs on Kosher, you're not supposed to be around pigs, much less working for them and around them, feeding them.

The dude is so hungry that he's starting to be jealous of the pig's lunch. Now you know you're in a bad place when you're looking at pigs and saying, hmm, that's looking good, right? That's not good. It's amazing what happens when you're hungry, right? You know, it's that way spiritually.

This thought just came to me. When you're hungry spiritually for God, that's one of the greatest gifts you can have is to be hungry spiritually. Because when you're hungry spiritually, every meeting is a blessing.

Every verse is a blessing because you're hungry. When you're full of yourself and not hungry, then you get picky and critical and this and that and all that. But when I'm over in Hong Kong a number of months ago and I'm with those underground Chinese pastors who have no one visiting them and all of that, and they would, I'm telling you, they were eight hours in front of me a day some days and just writing every word I would say, everything just, why, they're hungry.

Other people, maybe some of you here, you're like, yeah, let me see what this is about. I'm visiting Brooklyn Tabernacle. It ain't all that.

I'm just sitting here and watching. Hungry. So anyway, he says, wait a minute.

He came to his senses. I close. He came to his senses.

That means a person can come to their senses. He came to his senses and he said this. Wait a minute.

This is crazy. I want to eat the pig's food and my father got servants who don't eat that. What have I done? Where am I? That's a great question.

Went to God that the Holy Spirit would help everyone and watching in the building and watching on the webcast and in the choir. Like, where am I? What's going on? Did you know a lot of people just keep going, just keep living, spending, going, running, and they never stop and say, where am I? Like, what is this about? They never, till it's too late. So he said, wait a minute.

Time out. I'm gonna go back home and say, Dad, I've sinned against heaven. I've sinned against you.

Don't give me anything. Just give me, can I get a bed like with the servant's quarters and get a little of that chow? That's all I want. Because I'm not worthy anymore to be your son because I see what I've done.

I'm like a disaster area. So the Bible says, he left, went to go back home, and then of course that poignant verse, but his father saw him when he was far away. Why did his father see him when he was far away?

Because he was looking.

Isn't that wonderful about God? God not only goes after lost sheep, not only searches for a lost coin that someone else might've hurt and that's lost right in the house, but God is watching. He's watching today. He's watching right now.

I know it's true because the Word says it. He's right now watching this building and every other building, just waiting to see somebody in this building turn for home because you're not at home. You might be in church, but you're not at home.

You're not at home with the Father. You're not serving Jesus. You're not loving Jesus.

He's in the center of your life. He's a little compartment, but he won't be a compartment. You'll never know his power unless he's center stage, the most meaningful thing in your life, person in your life.

Christianity is not an addendum to your schedule. He's either everything or he ends up being nothing. So the Bible tells us that the Father sees him when he's far off and instead of being like, well, you know what? I knew this day would happen.

Oh, isn't that us? Oh, there comes my son. Yeah, my son, yeah. Notice he's not dressed too good.

Wonder what happened to all that money he wanted quick. No, that's you. That's me.

Judgmental and uh-huh. I told you so. Every dog has their day and bow, wow, wow to you.

How about that? And what you sow, you reap and a lot of other stuff. No, you know what the Father did? The Father ran toward him. Oh, I'd give anything to have seen the son's face and what he was thinking when he sees his dad running to him and then wrapping his arms around him and kissing him and hugging him and weeping like a baby.

The son's waiting for wham, wham. No, no, no, it's hug, hug, kiss. Here's the main thing you got to know about that story.

There's no, not one sentence of recrimination. There's no mention of what he had done. He's the one who says, I've sinned against heaven, I've sinned against heaven.

Shh, I know you've come home. Shh, I don't want to talk about it. Would you get the best robe, please? Would you get the ring which speaks of authority? It was like the stamp that someone would use, like a power of attorney.

Would you get the best sandals? My son's home. Son, shh. But dad, listen what happened.

Here's what I was going through when I asked that. Shh, just come in the house. No recrimination.

Aren't you happy that Jesus is that way? Have you ever dealt with people who even then when they say they forgive you, you know they haven't? How many know what I'm talking about? You've hurt them, you're wrong, you were wrong. You hurt them and they go, and you go, really, I'm really sorry about that. No, that's okay.

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, that's okay, that's okay. No, no, ain't no big thing, you know? And you just know there's a wall up. How many happy when Jesus forgives? He not only forgives, he forgets.

Can we put our hands together and just praise him for that? Last word, last word. What have we learned? That contrary to the religious establishment and what religion is called today in many places, God doesn't want to punish, he wants to save. He goes looking for the wandering person, not cursing them, he goes looking for them.

That's the spirit a church has to have, a pastor has to have, a choir has to have. You can get lost by just eating the next tuft of grass and it looks good and the next thing you know, you're in deep, deep trouble. You can get lost in your house.

You can be right around it. You could be right in church today. You could become a new member.

You could be on the staff of the church. And you could be wandering and getting in trouble, lost. And finally, we know that even when your own stubbornness and rebellion is the cause, instead of screaming at you, he welcomes you.

When my oldest girl was away from the Lord decades ago and she came back, I'm just reminded of it. She had wasted so much money, wasted her life. She had fought off every good thing her mom had taught her and raised her so well and her dad tried his best.

But did you know what? When she broke and came home, we never spoke one sentence about it. I heard her testimony recently. She spoke before I did at a big event in Indianapolis.

I didn't even know part of her story because we were just so happy she's home. Don't you love that about God? He's so happy you're home. He just says, why talk? Let's eat.

Let's have fellowship. Now here's the last thing that's amazing about God that was in our reading this week. Did you know that you could fight him off? There's a school of theology now, extreme Calvinism, that says, no, God is so sovereign that once he determines to save you, there's no way you can get away.

That's false. I'll tell you why it's false. Look at this passage.

Jesus is now crying over Jerusalem and he says, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets and stoned those sent to you. How often I have longed to gather your children, your people, you, together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you are not willing. He cries over a city.

He says, you've killed the prophets and you killed everyone I sent to you, and the next sentence you think would be, whoa, are you gonna get it now? He said, no, even though you've done that, so many times I wanted to gather you and hold you under my wings. I would've protected you. I would've sustained you.

I would've brought blessing on you, but you weren't willing. Did you know you can fight off Almighty God? Yes, you can. The people who say that what I said before about there's no way out except, you know, you're just chosen, doesn't matter, that makes Jesus a bad actor.

Why are you crying over a city that can't get saved anyway? If you've already ordained who's saved and they're not ordained to be saved, why are you crying over them? Don't cry over them. Just say, I know you rejected me. You had to reject me because you're not one of the chosen.

No, he wept over them, and he's not a bad actor. He weeps over some of us probably today and says, how many times could I have changed your life, but you weren't willing? You wouldn't come and say, here I am. You have to do anything.

All you have to do is fall on his arms. Fall on his arms. No, Pastor Cymbale, if you do that, then you're saying humans have to help God.

No, listen, if I'm at the bottom of a well that's not been in use for years, and it's all slimy green on the sides, and I fall at the bottom of the well, and I'm 30 feet down there, and my pelvis is broken, and one of my ankles is broken, and I'm gonna die, and somebody comes over the well and drops down a rope and says, listen, just hang on, and I'll lift you up. You could say, no, I like it down here. Send your rope back up where you got it from.

I'm not into ropes. Or you could say, I'm gonna hang on, and then he does all the lifting. Now, when that person gets out of the well, could they walk around and say, praise God, I saved myself.

I did something. No, you didn't. You held onto a rope.

He's the one who gave it to you. He's the one who lifted you. Let's pray.

Oh, how we love you today, and we praise you today, Jesus. We were the lost coin. Some of us lost right in church.

We're the lost sheep, getting into bad situations, but feeling good all the time. We're the rebellious prodigal son. We knew, we knew, we wouldn't listen to anyone.

No wiser father, no older person, no minister, no verse, no song, nothing could move us. We knew what we wanted to do. And the next thing we know, we were eating with pigs, empty inside, even though some of us had money, a supposed future, we had nothing without you.

Jesus, we have nothing without you. I say publicly, from all of our hearts to you, we have nothing without you. Can we say that amen to him? We have nothing.

We have nothing without you. You are life. Not money, not sex, not a car, not a job, not a career.

You are life. If there's anyone here, Lord, who's not at home, bring them home. If you're here today, I don't want you to come forward because there's nothing magic up front, but I do, if there's anyone who said, pastor, that was for me, just say it this way.

I need Jesus today. I need Jesus in a special way. All Christians need Jesus, but I need Jesus because somehow the enemy is plotting and planning and wanting to destroy me.

Wanting to destroy me, I see it now, but I'm going to just stand and let you know that you can pray for me as you close this service. No one move. If you want prayer, just stand where you are.

You want prayer, stand. God's going to see you standing. He's going to see that you've humbled yourself and say, I'm not exactly home the way I should be.

Father God, for everyone who stood, I pray that you will bring them home. Thank you for searching for them. Thank you for finding them today in your house.

But oh God, I know now you brought them here. You brought them by your love. They thought by accident, they thought because someone invited them or they got a reminder, let me go to church.

No, you brought them here because you're always searching for lost sheep, lost coins, lost sons and daughters. We love you today. Cement them next to you, Lord.

Strengthen their faith. Let them begin to grow in grace even today. Let them keep coming to the house of the Lord.

Every time it opens, let them read your word. Let them learn of you in prayer. I commit them to you.

Wrap your arms around them and feed them today. And now God, I pray that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit will be with us all today. Jesus, work in us.

God, make us conscious of your love and let us rest in it. Holy Spirit, help us. Talk to us and lead us.

And lastly, make us to love one another. By this shall everybody know we belong to you because we love one another. And we ask this in Jesus' name.

And everyone say it aloud.

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