

## Lost in the Store

I'm a grandfather. Thursday my mother had me paged me in the store because she could not find me. It was most reminiscent of my early youth, especially pre-school days, when I was prone to wander. It seemed for a while I always got lost whenever Mom took me to the store. I can hear it now, "Johnny Pope, come to the front; your mom is waiting for you by the front booth." Mom would hug me, say thank you to the personnel at the store, and then let me have it as soon as we exited the store. "Johnny, you stay right by Mama's side when we're in those stores, you hear me, boy?" "Yes ma'am," I'd answer.

In those years we lived outside Washington, D.C., so we often took the bus from our suburban community into the heart of the nation's capitol. I can hear in my memory the sound of the big diesel bus, the squeaking noise of the doors opening to the sights. The Capitol building, Washington monument, Jefferson and Lincoln memorials...flagship symbols of our freedom. Oh! those places looked like invitations to adventure to me. Mom walked rapidly past the history to the department stores and finally the grocery store. I remember the sight, sound and smell of those old grocery stores. The fish, the bread, and the ground coffee. I guess I was still trying to see something in those stores that would be as interesting as The Smithsonian. And before I knew it, I had lost sight of Mom...that is until the announcement over the intercom.

When my mom and I go to the store these days, she trusts me with half her shopping list. Then we meet up, pay for the groceries and leave. I have to admit, I got pre-occupied in the store this past Thursday. And while I was milling around looking for something as interesting as The Smithsonian, I heard that clarion call from my past now once again in my present surroundings. What a blast from my past! My eighty-six year old mom was paging me again. As I hurried to the front, I could feel the embarrassment. I once again imagined people saying, "Here goes a boy who is in trouble." Thankfully, Mom was understanding and most cordial, outside of the store as well as inside the store. As I look back now, it was fun. I do want to assure my mom who may read this, I will not make a habit of lolly-gagging next trip to the store.

In the parable of the woman and the lost coin, allow me to bring something to your attention: *"Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?"* (Luke 15:8). There is so much we could say about this parable. We could talk of the significance of the coin itself. We could talk about the rejoicing that takes place upon finding the coin. But the point I would like to bring out is the coin was lost in the house. How many people will be in God's house today that look fine, but they are as lost as that coin. You may be older now and appear to be mature in the faith but you are lost in God's house. Some are lost in soul salvation and have made a profession of faith, but not possession of the Savior. Some are Christian in their heart, but they have lost direction and their spiritual radar is malfunctioning. Today I pray you will, in your spirit, be as surprised as I was when this past Thursday I was summoned to the front of the store.

For those who are reading these words and are lost in the store or for those who carry a burden for someone lost in the store, here's a threefold plan that our Lord revealed for us in Luke 15:8:

### **I. Light the candle.**

The Bible says, *"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple"* (Psalm 119:130). Jesus said in Luke 15:8, *"...light a candle...."* Here we are at the beginning of another year; let's decide that we shall read the Bible from cover to cover! If you only read four chapters of the Bible a day, you'll have it read through in a year. Read as much as you need to, study to show yourselves approved (II Timothy 2:15). *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and*

*marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12). The Word will convict us and guide us through this life. It works like a compass giving us the constant "Polaris" touch.

## **II. Sweep the house.**

The Bible says, "...*and sweep the house...*" (Luke 15:8). Don't wait until spring comes to do the cleaning; now is the best time. Are there sins of commission in our lives? These are the sins that we overtly commit that are opposed to God's Word and will. Are there sins of omission in our lives? These are the good and godly deeds that should be done that are going undone. When King Hezekiah came to power one of the first things he did was to clean up the Temple of the Lord. I love the thundering dogmatic way in which Hezekiah did it: "*And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place*" (II Chronicles 29:5). There is no room for compromise here; get rid of the filth!

Are any readers covered in the filth of this world? Rare is the preacher that comes out and specifically speaks against sin and names it. Today some of the social evils that at one time were considered taboo are now not only accepted but promoted in churches. Many church-going families see nothing wrong with dances sponsored by churches and Christian schools. I know of two churches that have sponsored wine-drinking events and with braggadocio. Churches today use so many different versions of the Bible that it confuses the people. Can you imagine a schoolteacher getting up to teach out of a textbook that says one thing and the students have about five different renderings of the text? Imagine this hypothetical situation: the teacher gives a test, then she grades off for errors the student makes. The student comes to the teacher complaining; "Well I didn't read the answer like yours in the textbook you gave me." Don't be surprised when we do address sin, backsliders start saying, "Well, I have the right to interpret the Bible in my own view, and this translation stands behind me." There is something very valuable in the constancy of the Scriptures, reading the same Words from the same Book. Let's sweep the house with the Old Book. It will still, as the children's song says, "give a new look."

## **III. Don't give up!**

Jesus said, "...*and seek diligently till she find it?*" (Luke 15:8) in our text. Our lady in the parable would not give up until she found the coin! Let us not develop apathy that besetting sins are here to stay. Let us, while we are still in the throes of the New Year, make resolution that we shall address and proactively do something about our condition. You may have failed many times. When Thomas Edison invented the incandescent light bulb, it was after attempting ten thousand times. It was said that his attitude was those attempts were not failures - they were simply nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine ways of not doing it.

Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, we only have today to operate in, so let us seize the day. Listen carefully, Jesus said, "...*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*" (Mark 4:9). Do you hear God's voice paging you? To all our lost boys and girls, this is the time to be found, to come to the front. Quit playing in the aisles, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*" (I Corinthians 15:58).

- Pastor Pope -

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