

The Lost Silver Piece

A Sermon

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C. H. SPURGEON,

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“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? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”—[Luke 15:8-10](#).

THIS CHAPTER IS FULL OF GRACE and truth. Its three consecutive parables have been thought to be merely a repetition of the same doctrine under different metaphors, and if that were so, the truth which it teaches is so important that it could not be rehearsed too often in our hearing. Moreover, it is one which we are apt to forget, and it is well to have it again and again impressed upon our minds. The truth here taught is just this—that mercy stretches forth her hand to misery, that grace receives men as sinners, that it deals with demerit, unworthiness, and worthlessness; that those who think themselves righteous are not the objects of divine compassion, but the unrighteous, the guilty, and the undeserving, are the proper subjects for the infinite mercy of God; in a word, that salvation is not of merit but of grace. This truth I say is most important, for it encourages penitents to return to their Father; but it is very apt to be forgotten, for even those who are saved by grace too often fall into the spirit of the elder brother, and speak as if, after all, their salvation depended on the works of the law.

But, my dear friends, the three parables recorded in this chapter are not repetitions; they all declare the same main truth, but each one reveals a different phase of it. The three parables are three sides of a vast pyramid of gospel doctrine, but there is a distinct inscription upon each. Not only in the similitude, but also in the teaching covered by the similitude, there is variety, progress, enlargement, discrimination. We have only need to read attentively to discover that in this trinity of parables, we have at once unity of essential truth and distinctness of description. Each one of the parables is needful to the other, and when combined they present us with a far more complete exposition of their doctrine than could have been conveyed by any one of them. Note for a moment the first of the three which brings before us a shepherd seeking a lost sheep. To whom does this refer? Who is the shepherd of Israel? Who brings again that which has gone astray? Do we not clearly discern the ever glorious and blessed Chief Shepherd of the sheep, who lays down his life that he may save them? Beyond a question, we see in the first parable the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The second

parable is most fitly placed where it is. It, I doubt not, represents the work of the Holy Spirit, working, through the church, for the lost but precious souls of men. The church is that woman who sweeps her house to find the lost piece of money, and in her the Spirit works his purposes of love. How the work of the Holy Spirit follows the work of Christ. As here we first see the shepherd seeking the lost sheep, and then read of the woman seeking the lost piece of money, so the great Shepherd redeems, and then the Holy Spirit restores the soul. You will perceive that each parable is thoroughly understood in its minute details when so interpreted. The shepherd seeks a sheep which has wilfully gone astray, and so far the element of sin is present; the lost piece of money does not bring up that idea, nor was it needful that it should, since the parable does not deal with the pardon of sin as the first does. The sheep, on the other hand, though stupid is not altogether senseless and dead, but the piece of money is altogether unconscious and powerless, and therefore all the fitter emblem of man as the Holy Ghost begins to deal with him, dead in trespasses and sins. The third parable evidently represents the divine Father in his abundant love receiving the lost child who comes back to him. The third parable would be likely to be misunderstood without the first and the second. We have sometimes heard it said—here is the prodigal received as soon as he comes back, no mention being made of a Savior who seeks and saves him. Is it possible to teach all truths in one single parable? Does not the first one speak of the shepherd seeking the lost sheep? Why need repeat what had been said before? It has also been said that the prodigal returned of his own free will, for there is no hint of the operation of a superior power upon his heart, it seems as if he himself spontaneously says, “I will arise, and go unto my Father.” The answer is, that the Holy Spirit’s work had been clearly described in the second parable, and needed not to be introduced again. If you put the three pictures in a line, they represent the whole compass of salvation, but each one apart sets forth the work in reference to one or other of the divine persons of the blessed Trinity. The shepherd, with much pain and self-sacrifice, seeks the reckless, wandering sheep; the woman diligently searches for the insensible but lost piece of money; the father receives the returning prodigal. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. The three life-sketches are one, and one truth is taught in the whole three, yet each one is distinct from the other, and by itself instructive.

May we be taught of God while we try to discover the mind of the Spirit in this parable, which, as we believe, represents the work of the Holy Spirit in and through the church. The church is evermore represented as a woman, either the chaste bride of Christ, or the shameless courtesan of Babylon; as for good a woman sweeps the house, so for evil a woman takes the leaven and hides it in the meal till all is leavened. Towards Christ a wife and towards men a mother, the church is most fitly set forth as a woman. A woman with a house under her control is the full idea of the text, her husband away and herself in charge of the treasure: just such is the condition of the church since the departure of the Lord Jesus to the Father.

To bring each part of the text under inspection we shall notice man in three conditions—*lost, sought, found*.

I. First, the parable treats of man, the object of divine mercy, as lost.

Notice, first, the treasure was *lost in the dust*. The woman had lost her piece of silver, and in order to find it she had to sweep for it, which proves that it had fallen into a dusty place, fallen to the earth, where it might be hidden and concealed amid rubbish and dirt. Every man of Adam born is as a piece of silver lost, fallen, dishonored, and some are buried amid foulness and dust. If we should drop many pieces of money they would fall into different positions; one of them might fall into actual mire, and be lost there; another might fall upon a carpet, a cloth, or a clean, well-polished floor, and be left there. If you have lost your money, it is equally lost into whatever place it may have fallen. So all men are alike lost, but they have not all fallen into the like condition of apparent defilement. One man from the surroundings of his childhood and the influences of education, has never indulged in the coarser and more brutalising vices; he has never been a blasphemer, perhaps never openly even a Sabbath-breaker, yet he may be lost for all that. Another, on the other hand, has fallen into great excess of riot; he is familiar with wantonness and chambering, and all manner of evil; he is lost, he is lost with an emphasis: but the more decorous sinner is lost also. There may be some here this morning (and we wish always to apply the truth as we go on), who are lost in the very worst of corruption: I would to God that they would take hope and learn from the parable before us, that the church of God and the Spirit of God are seeking after them, and they may be among the found ones yet. Since, on the other hand, there are many here who have not dropped into such unclean places, I would affectionately remind them that they are nevertheless lost, and they need as much to be sought for by the Spirit of God as if they were among the vilest of the vile. To save the moral needs divine grace as certainly as to save the immoral. If you be lost, my dear hearer, it will be small avail to you that you perished respectably, and were accursed in decent company: if you lack but one thing, yet if the deficiency be fatal, it will be but a poor consolation that you had only one lack. If one leak sent the vessel to the bottom; it was no comfort to the crew that their ship only leaked in one place. One disease may kill a man; he may be sound everywhere else, but it will be a sorry comfort to him to know that he might have lived long had but that one organ been sound. If, dear hearer, thou shouldst have no sin whatever save only an evil heart of unbelief, if all thy external life should be lovely and amiable, yet if that one fatal sin be in thee, thou canst draw small consolation from all else that is good about thee. Thou art lost by nature, and thou must be found by grace, whoever thou mayst be.

In this parable that which was lost was *altogether ignorant of its being lost*. The silver coin was not a living thing, and therefore had no consciousness of its being lost or sought after. The piece of money lost was quite as content to be on the floor or in the dust, as it was to be in the purse of its owner amongst its like. It knew nothing about its being lost, and

could not know. And it is just so with the sinner who is spiritually dead in sin, he is unconscious of his state, nor can we make him understand the danger and terror of his condition. When he feels that he is lost, there is already some work of grace in him. When the sinner knows that he is lost, he is no longer content with his condition, but begins to cry out for mercy, which is evidence that the finding work has already begun. The unconverted sinner will confess that he is lost because he knows the statement to be scriptural, and therefore out of compliment to God's word he admits it to be true; but he has no idea of what is meant by it, else would he either deny it with proud indignation, or he would bestir himself to pray that he might be restored to the place from which he has fallen, and be numbered with Christ's precious property. O my hearers, this it is that makes the Spirit of God so needful in all our preachings, and every other soul-saving exercise, because we have to deal with insensible souls. The man who puts the fire-escape against the window of a burning house, may readily enough rescue those who are aware of their danger, and who rush to the front and help him, or at least are submissive to him in his work of delivering them; but if a man were insane, if he played with the flames, if he were idiotic and thought that some grand illumination were going on, and knew nothing of the danger but was only "glamoured by the glare," then would it be hard work for the rescuer. Even thus it is with sinners. They know not, though they profess to know, that sin is hell, that to be an alien from God is to be condemned already, to live in sin is to be dead while you live. The insensibility of the piece of money fairly pictures the utter indifference of souls unquickened by divine grace.

The silver piece was *lost but not forgotten*. The woman knew that she had ten pieces of silver originally; she counted them over carefully, for they were all her little store, and she found only nine, but she well remembered that one more was hers and ought to be in her hand. This is our hope for the Lord's lost ones, they are lost but not forgotten, the heart of the Savior remembers them, and prays for them. O soul, I trust you are one whom Jesus calls his own, if so he remembers the pangs which he endured in redeeming you, and he recollects the Father's love which was reflected on you from old eternity, when the Father gave you into the hands of his beloved Son. You are not forgotten of the Holy Spirit who seeks you for the Savior. This is the minister's hope, that there is a people whom the Lord remembers and whom he never will forget, though they forget him. Strangers to him, far-off, ignorant, callous, careless, dead, yet the everlasting heart in heaven throbs towards them with love; and the mind of the Spirit, working on earth, is directed to them. These, who were numbered and reckoned up of old are still in the inventory of the divine memory; and though lost they are earnestly remembered still. In some sense this is true of every sinner here. You are lost, but that you are remembered is evident, for I am sent to-day to preach the gospel of Jesus to you. God has thoughts of love concerning you, and bids you turn unto him and live. Have respect, I pray you, to the word of his salvation.

Next, the piece of silver was lost *but still claimed*. Observe that the woman called the money, “*my piece which was lost*.” When she lost its possession she did not lose her right to it; it did not become somebody else’s when it slipped out of her hand and fell upon the floor. Those for whom Christ hath died, whom he hath peculiarly redeemed, are not Satan’s even when they are dead in sin. They may come under the devil’s usurped dominion, but the monster shall be chased from his throne. Christ has received them of old of the Father, and he has bought them with his precious blood, and he will have them; he will chase away the intruder and claim his own. Thus saith the Lord, “Your covenant with death is disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.” Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. Jesus shall have his own, and none shall pluck them from his hold; he will defend his claim against all comers.

Further, observe that the lost piece of money was not only remembered and claimed, but *it was also valued*. In these three parables the value of the lost article steadily rises. This is not very clear at first sight, because it may be said that a sheep is of more value than a piece of money; but notice that the shepherd only lost one sheep out of a hundred, but the woman lost one piece out of ten, and the father one son out of two. Now, it is not the value of the thing in itself which is here set forth, for the soul of a man, as absolutely valued in comparison with the infinite God, is of small esteem; but because of his love it is of great value to him. The one piece of money to the woman was a tenth part of all she had, and it was very valuable in her esteem. To the Lord of love a lost soul is very precious: it is not because of its intrinsic value, but it has a relative value which God sets at a high rate. The Holy Spirit values souls, and therefore the church prizes them too. The church sometimes says to herself, “We have but few conversions, few members; many are called, but few chosen.” She counts over her few converts, her few members, and one soul is to her all the more precious because of the few there are who in these times are in the treasury of Christ, stamped with the image of the great Being, and made of the precious genuine silver of God’s own grace. O dear friend, you think yourself of small value, you who are conscious that you have sinned, but the church does not think you of small value, and the Holy Spirit does not despise you. He sets a high price upon you, and so do his people. We value your souls, we only wish we knew how to save them; we would spare no expense or pains if we might but be the means of finding you, and bringing you once more into the great Owner’s hand.

The piece of money was lost, but *it was not lost hopelessly*. The woman had hopes of recovering it, and therefore she did not despair, but set to work at once. It is a dreadful thing to think of those souls which are lost hopelessly. Their state reminds me of a paragraph I have cut from this week’s newspaper:—“The fishing smack Veto, of Grimsby, S. Cousins, master, arrived in port from the Dogger Bank on Saturday night. The master reports that on the previous Wednesday, when about two hundred miles from Spurn, he sighted to the leeward what at first appeared to be a small schooner in distress, but on bearing down to

her found her to be a full-sized lifeboat, upwards of twenty feet long, and full of water up to her corks. There was no name on the boat, which had evidently belonged to some large ship or steamer. It was painted white both inside and out, with a brown streak round the rim. When alongside, on closer examination, three dead sailors were perceived lying aft, huddled together, and a fourth athwart in the bow, with his head hanging over the rowlocks. They seemed from their dress and general appearance to be foreigners, but the bodies had been frightfully; 'washed about,' and were in a state of decomposition, and had evidently been dead some weeks. The water-logged waif drifted on with its ghastly cargo, and the horrible sight so shocked the crew of the Veto that afterwards they were almost too unnerved to attend to their trawling, and the smack, in consequence, returned to port with a comparatively small catch, and sooner than expected." Do you wonder at the men sickening in the presence of this mystery of the sea? I shudder as I think I see that Charon-like boat floating on and on; mercy need not follow it, she can confer no boon; love need not seek it, no deed of hers can save. My soul sees, as in a vision, souls hopelessly lost, drifting on the waves of eternity, beyond all hope or help. Alas! Alas! Millions of our race are now in that condition. Upon them has passed the second death, and powerless are we all to save them. Towards them even the gospel has no aspect of hope. Our joy is that we have to deal to-day with lost souls who are not yet hopelessly lost. They are dead in sin, but there is a quickening power which can make them live. O mariner of the sea of life, fisher of men upon this stormy sea, those castaways whom you meet with are accessible to your efforts of compassion, they can be rescued from the pitiless deeps; your mission is not a hopeless one. I rejoice over the ungodly man here to-day that he is not in torment, not in hell, he is not among those whose worm dieth not and whose fire is not quenched. I congratulate the Christian church too, that her piece of money has not fallen where she cannot find it. I rejoice that the fallen around us are not past hope; yea, though they dwell in the worst dens of London, though they be thieves and harlots, they are not beyond the reach of mercy. Up, O church of God, while possibilities of mercy remain! Gird up your loins, be soul-winners, and resolve by the grace of God that every hour of hope shall be well employed by you.

One other point is worthy of notice. The piece of silver was lost, but it was lost *in the house*, and the woman knew it to be so. If she had lost it in the streets, the probabilities are she would not have looked for it again, for other hands might have closed over it. If she had lost it in a river, or dropped it in the sea, she might very fairly have concluded that it was gone for ever, but evidently she was sure that she had lost it in the house. Is it not a consolation to know that those here, who are lost, are still in the house? They are still under the means of grace, within the sphere of the church's operations, within the habitation of which she is the mistress, and where the Holy Spirit works. What thankfulness there ought to be in your minds that you are not lost as heathens, nor lost amid Romish or Mohammedan superstition, but lost where the gospel is faithfully and plainly preached to you; where you

are lovingly told, that whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus is not condemned. Lost, but lost where the church's business is to look after you, where it is the Spirit's work to seek and to find you.

This is the condition of the lost soul, depicted as a lost piece of silver.

II. Secondly, we shall notice the soul under another condition: we shall view it as sought.

By whom was the piece of silver sought? It *was sought by its owner personally*. Notice, she who lost the money lit a candle and swept the house, and sought diligently till *she* found it. So, brethren, I have said that the woman represents the Holy Spirit, or rather the church in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Now, there will never be a soul found till the Holy Spirit seeks after it. He is the great soul finder. The heart will continue in the dark until he comes with his illuminating power. He is the owner, he possesses it, and he alone can effectually seek after it. The God to whom the soul belongs must seek the soul. But he does it by his church, for souls belong to the church too; they are sons and daughters of the chosen mother, they are her citizens and treasures. For this reason the church must personally seek after souls. She cannot delegate her work to anybody. The woman did not pay a servant to sweep the house, but she swept it herself. Her eyes were much better than a servant's eyes, for the servant's eyes would only look after somebody else's money, and perhaps would not see it; but the mistress would look after her own money, and she would be certain to light upon it if it were anywhere within sight. When the church of God solemnly feels, "It is our work to look after sinners, we must not delegate it even to the minister, or to the City-missionary, or the Biblewoman, but the church as a church must look after the souls of sinners," then I believe souls will be found and saved. When the church recognizes that these lost souls belong to her, she will be likely to find them. It will be a happy day when every church of God is actively at work for the salvation of sinners. It has been the curse of Christendom that she has ventured to delegate her sacred duties to men called priests, or that she has set apart certain persons to be called the religious who are to do works of mercy and charity and of evangelization. We are, every one of us who are Christ's, bound to do our own share; nay, we should deem it a privilege of which we will not be deprived, personally to serve God, personally to sweep the house and search after the lost spiritual treasures. The church herself, in the power of the indwelling Spirit of God, must seek lost souls.

Note that this seeking became *a matter of chief concern* with the woman. I do not know what other business she had to do, but I do know that she put it all by to find the piece of money. There was the corn to be ground for the morning meal, perhaps that was done, at any rate, if not so, she left it unprepared. There was a garment to be mended, or water to be drawn, or the fire to be kindled, or the friends and neighbors to be conversed with—never mind, the mistress forgets everything else, she has lost her piece of money, and she must find it at once. So with the church of God, her chief concern should be to seek the perishing sons of men. To bring souls to know Jesus, and to be saved in him with a great salvation

should be the church's great longing and concern. She has other things to do. She has her own edification to consider, she has other matters to be attended to in their place, but this first, this evermore and always first. The woman evidently said, "The money is lost, I must find that first." The loss of her piece of silver was so serious a matter that if she sat down to her mending, her hands would miss their nimbleness, or if any other household work demanded her attention, it would be an irksome task to her, for she was thinking of that piece of coin. If her friend came and talked with her, she would say to herself, "I wish she were gone, for I want to be looking after my lost money." I wish the church of God had such an engrossing love for poor sinners that she would feel everything to be an impertinence which hindered her from soul-saving. We have every now and then, as a church, a little to do with politics, and a little to do with finance, for we are still in the world, but I love to see in all churches everything kept in the background, compared with soul-saving work. This must be first and foremost. Educate the people—yes, certainly; we take an interest in everything which will do good to our fellow citizens, for we are men as well as Christians; but first and foremost our business is to win souls, to bring men to Jesus, to hunt up those who bear heaven's image, though lost and fallen. This is what we must be devoted to, this is the main and chief concern of believers, the very reason for the existence of a church; if she regard it not, she forgets her highest end.

Now note, that the woman having thus set her heart to find her money, *she used the most fit and proper means* to accomplish her end. First, she lit a candle. So doth the Holy Spirit in the church. In Eastern dwellings it would be necessary, if you lost a piece of money and wanted to find it, to light a candle at any time; for in our Savior's day glass was not used, and the windows of houses were only little slits in the side of the wall, and the rooms were very dark. Almost all the Oriental houses are very dark to this day, and if anything be dropped as small as a piece of silver, it must be looked for with a candle even at high noon. Now, the sphere in which the church moves here on earth is a dim twilight of mental ignorance, and moral darkness, and in order to find a lost soul, light must be brought to bear upon it. The Holy Spirit uses the light of the gospel; he convinces men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. The woman lit a candle, and even thus the Holy Spirit lights up some chosen man whom he makes to be a light in the world. He calls to himself whomsoever he wills, and makes him a lamp to shine upon the people. Such a man will have to be consumed in his calling, like a candle he will be burnt up in light-giving. Earnest zeal, and laborious self-sacrifice, will eat him up. So may this church, and every church of God, be continually using up her anointed men and women, who shall be as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, to find out lost souls.

But she was not content with her candle, she fetched her broom, she swept the house. If she could not find the silver as things were in the house, she brought the broom to bear upon the accumulated dust. Oh, how a Christian church, when it is moved by the Holy

Spirit, cleanses herself and purges all her work! “Perhaps,” saith she, “some of our members are inconsistent, and so men are hardened in sin; these offenders must be put away. The tone of religion is low—that may be hindering the conversion of souls, it must be raised. Perhaps our statements of truth, and our ways of proclaiming it, are not the most likely to command attention, we must amend them; we must use the best possible methods, we must in fact sweep the whole house.” I delight to see an earnest house-sweeping by confession of sin at a prayer meeting, or by a searching discourse, a house-sweeping when every one is earnest to reform himself, and to get nearer to God himself by a revival of his own personal piety. This is one of the means by which the church is enabled to find the hidden ones. Besides this, all the neighborhood round the church (for the house is the sphere in which the church moves), must be ransacked, stirred, turned over, in a word “swept.” A church that is really in earnest after souls will endeavor to penetrate the gloom of poverty and stir the heaps of profligacy. She will hunt high and hunt low if by any means she may rescue from destruction the precious thing upon which her heart is set.

Carefully note that this seeking after the lost piece of silver with fitting instruments, the broom and the candle, was *attended with no small stir*. She swept the house—there was dust for her eyes; if any neighbors were in the house there was dust for them. You cannot sweep a house without causing some confusion and temporary discomfort. We sometimes hear persons complain of certain Christians for making too much ado about religion. The complaint shows that something is being done, and in all probability some success being achieved. Those people who have no interest in the lost silver are annoyed at the dust; it is getting down their throats, and they cough at it; never mind, good woman, sweep again, and make them grumble more. Another will say, “I do not approve of religious excitement, I am for quiet and orderly modes of procedure.” I dare say that this good woman’s neighbor, when she came in to make a call, exclaimed in disgust, “Why, mistress, there is not a chair to sit down upon in comfort, and you are so taken up about this lost money that you scarce give me an answer. Why, you are wasting candle at a great rate, and seem quite in a fever.” “Well,” the good woman would answer, “but I must find my piece of silver, and in order to seek it out I can bear a little dust myself, and so must you if you wish to stop here while I am searching.” An earnest church will be sure to experience a degree of excitement when it is soul-hunting, and very cautious, very fastidious, very critical people will find fault. Never mind them, my brethren, sweep on and let them talk on. Never mind making a dust if you find the money. If souls be saved irregularities and singularities are as the small dust of the balance. If men be brought to Jesus, care nothing what cavillers say. Sweep on, sweep on, even though men exclaim, “They that turn the world upside down are come hither also.” Though confusion and stir, and even persecution be the present result, yet if the finding of an immortal soul be the ultimate effect, you will be well repaid for it.

It is to be remarked, also, that in the seeking of this piece of silver the coin was *sought in a most engrossing manner*. For a time nothing was thought of but the lost silver. Here is a candle: the good woman does not read by the light of it, nor mend her garments; no, but the candle-light is all spent on that piece of money. All its light is consecrated to the search. Here is a broom: there is other work for the broom to do, but for the present it sweeps for the silver and for nothing else. Here are two bright eyes in the good woman's head: ay, but they look for nothing but the lost money; she does not care what else may be in the house or out of it—her money she cares for, and that she must find; and here she is with candle, broom, strength, eyesight, faculties of mind, and limbs of body, all employed in searching for the lost treasure. It is just so when the Holy Ghost works in a church, the preacher, like a candle, yields his light, but it is all with the view of finding out the sinner and letting him see his lost estate. Whether it be the broom of the law or the light of the gospel, all is meant for the sinner. All the Holy Spirit's wisdom is engaged to find the sinner, and all the living church's talent and substance and power are put forth if by any means the sinner may be saved. It is a fair picture, may I see it daily. How earnestly souls are sought for when the Spirit of God is truly in his church!

One other thought only. This woman *sought for her piece of silver continuously*—"till she found it." May you and I, as parts of the church of God, look after wandering souls till we find them. We say they discourage us. No doubt that piece of silver did discourage the woman who sought it. We complain that men do not appear inclined to religion. Did the piece of money lend the housewife any help? Was it any assistance to her? She did the seeking, she did it all. And the Holy Ghost through you, my brother, seeks the salvation of the sinner, not expecting the sinner to help him, for the sinner is averse to being found. What, were you repulsed the other day by one whose spiritual good you longed for? Go again! Were your invitations laughed at? Invite again! Did you become the subject of ridicule through your earnest entreaties? Entreat again! Those are not always the least likely to be saved who at first repel our efforts. A harsh reception is sometimes only an intimation that the heart recognises the power of the truth, though it does not desire at present to yield to it. Persevere, brother, till you find the soul you seek. You who spend so much effort in your Sunday-school class, use still your candle, enlighten the child's mind still, sweep the house till you find what you seek; never give up the child till it is brought to Christ. You, in your senior class, dealing with that young man or young woman, cease not from your private prayers and from your personal admonitions, till that heart belongs to Jesus. You who can preach in the streets, or visit the lodging-houses, or go from door to door with tracts, I charge you all, for you can all do something, never give up the pursuit of sinners until they are safely lodged in Jesus' hands. We must have them saved! With all the intense perseverance of the woman who turned everything upside down, and counted all things but loss that she might but find her treasure, so may we also, the Spirit of God working in us, upset everything

of rule and conventionality, and form and difficulty, if we may but by any means save some, and bring out of the dust those who bear the King's image, and are dear to the King's heart.

III. Time has fled, alas! too swiftly, and so I must close with the third point, which is the piece of silver FOUND.

Found! In the first place, this was *the woman's ultimatum, and nothing short of it*. She never stopped until the coin was found. So it is the Holy Spirit's design, not that the sinner should be brought into a hopeful state, but that he should be actually saved: and this is the church's great concern, not that people be made hearers, not that they be made orthodox professors, but that they be really changed and renewed, regenerated and born again.

The woman herself found the piece of money. It did not turn up by accident, nor did some neighbor step in and find it. The Spirit of God himself finds sinners, and the church of God herself as a rule is the instrument of their recovery. Dear brethren, a few years ago there was a kind of slur cast upon the visible church, by many enthusiastic but mistaken persons, who dreamed that the time was come for doing away with organised effort, for irregular agencies outside of the visible church were to do all the work. Certain remarkable men sprang up whose ferocious censures almost amounted to attacks upon the recognised churches. Their efforts were apart from the regular ministry, and in some cases ostentatiously in opposition to it. It was as much their aim to pull down the existing church as to bring in converts. I ask any man who has fairly watched these efforts, what they have come to? I never condemned them, nor will I; but I do venture to say to-day in the light of their history, that they have not superseded regular church work and never will. The masses were to be aroused, but where are the boasted results? What has become of many of these much-vaunted works? Those who have worked in connection with a church of God have achieved permanent usefulness; those who acted as separatist agencies, though they blazed for awhile before the public eye and filled the corners of the newspapers with spiritual puffery, are now either altogether or almost extinct. Where are the victories which were to be won by these freebooters? Echo answers, Where? We have to fall back on the old disciplined troops. God means to bless the church still, and it is through the church that he will continue to send a benediction upon the sons of men. I am glad to hear of anybody preaching the gospel if Christ is preached I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. I remember the Master's words, "Forbid them not! He that is not against us is for us." Still the mass of conversions will come through the church, and by her regular organised efforts. The woman who lights the candle and sweeps the house, to whom the silver belongs, will herself find it.

Now notice when she had found it what she did, *she rejoiced*. The greater her trouble in searching, the higher her joy in finding. What joy there is in the church of God when sinners are converted! We have our high holidays, we have our mirthful days downstairs in the lecture hall, when we hear of souls turned from the paths of the destroyer—and in the vestries behind, your pastors and elders often experience such joy as only heaven can equal,

when we have heard the stories of souls emancipated from the slavery of sin, and led into the perfect liberty which Jesus gives. The church rejoices.

Next, she calls *her friends and neighbors* to share her joy. I am afraid we do not treat our friends and neighbors with quite enough respect, or remember to invite them to our joys. Who are they? I think the angels are here meant; not only the angels in heaven, but those who are watching here below. Note well, that when the shepherd took home the sheep, it is written, “*There shall be joy in heaven* over one sinner that repenteth;” but it does not mention heaven here, nor speak of the future, but it is written, “*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God.*” Now, the church is on earth, and the Holy Spirit is on earth, at work; when there is a soul saved, the angels down below, who keep watch and ward around the faithful, and so are our friends and neighbors, rejoice with us. Know ye not that angels are present in our assemblies? for this reason the apostle tells us that the woman hath her head covered in the assembly. He saith, “Because of the angels, for they love order and decorum.” The angels are wherever the saints are, beholding our orders and rejoicing in our joy. When we see conversions we may bid them rejoice too, and they will praise God with us. I do not suppose the rejoicing ends there; for as angels are always ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, they soon convey the tidings to the hosts above, and heaven rejoices over one repenting sinner.

The joy is a present joy; it is a joy in the house, in the church in her own sphere; it is the joy of her neighbors who are round about her here below. All other joy seems swallowed up in this: as every other occupation was suspended to find the lost silver, so every other joy is hushed when the precious thing is found. The church of God has a thousand joys—the joy of her saints ascending to the skies, the joy of her saints ripening for glory, the joy of such as contend with sin and overcome it, and grow in grace and receive the promise; but the chief Joy in the church, which swallows all others, as Aaron’s rod swallowed up the other rods, is the joy over the lost soul which, after much sweeping and searching, is found at last.

The practical lesson to the unconverted is just this. Dear friend, *see what value is set upon you*. You think that nobody cares for you—why, heaven and earth care for you! You say, “I am as nothing, a castaway, and I am utterly worthless.” No, you are not worthless to the blessed Spirit, nor worthless to the church of God—she longs for you.

See, again, *how false that suspicion of yours is that you will not be welcome* if you come to Christ. Welcome! welcome! why, the church is searching for you; the Spirit of God is searching for you. Do not talk of welcome, you will be a great deal more than welcome. Oh, how glad will Christ be, and the Spirit be, and the church be, to receive you! Ah! but you complain that you have done nothing to make you fit for mercy. Talk not so, what had the lost piece of money done? What could it do? It was lost and helpless. They who sought it did all; he who seeks you will do all for you. O poor soul, since Christ now bids thee come,

come! If his Spirit draws thee, yield! Since the promise now speaks, “Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool,” accept the promise. Believe in Jesus. God bless you and save you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 136 and [Luke 15](#).