Slide #2

The Parable of the Lost Coin - Luke 15: 8 – 10

**8**“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?**9**And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ **10**In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Title Slide

It’s hard to believe it’s Spring. One day it’s snowing. Two days later it’s 70. Thunderstorms, snow showers and tornado warnings in the span of 2 weeks. We’re all eager for Spring weather because we’re ready to get out. We’ve been cooped up all winter. We’re ready to get into the yard. Mow the lawn. Plant some flowers. Clean out the garage. Get the patio furniture out. Fire up the grill. That’s just the stuff we do outside.

Inside, regardless of the weather, we’ve been doing our Spring cleaning. Cleaning out the closet to move the winter clothes to the back and pull the summer clothes out. Swapping boots for sandals. Putting away the cake pans and crock pots to bring out the grilling platters and salad bowls. On the few nice days we’ve had, we’ve let the windows open to allow the breeze to blow the dust bunnies out of the corners of the rooms. Cleaning the spots from the rock salt on our floors.

Lots of things to do to ready our home and yard for the Spring. But, what about our soul? What have we been doing to get our soul ready for the new season? When I say soul, we can think of life, spirit, heart, soul, or mind. Our soul is made up of all those parts that are who we are. As you’re going about your spring cleaning, here are some tips for some soul cleaning to make way for new life.

1. Purge your negative thoughts: When our negative thoughts get built up, we become more and more negative until it’s hard to find joy in a sunny day. Norman Vincent Peale wrote a book called The Power of Positive Thinking. He knew that our thoughts have power and thinking positive thoughts empowers us to have a happy life while thinking negative thoughts is a quick slide down the hill into Doomsville.

There’s an exercise that someone taught me years ago to help purge negative thoughts. Take a blank piece of paper and a pencil. Write down all your negative thoughts. Just keeping writing ‘til they’re all out. Turn over the paper and fill up the back if you need more space. Just let it all out. You may be surprised at how long it takes to get it all out.

Next, get a black marker and write all your blessings on the paper over the pencil markings until you can’t see the pencil anymore. Spend time filling up the whole paper, both sides, giving thanks for all God has done for you. It may start off slow after you’ve just let out all the negativity. This practice allows you to let go of the negative and fill that space with positive thoughts.

1. Purge old habits: Think about those things that you’ve always done that may have brought you great joy at one time but seem rote and maybe not so life giving. Think about what may give you life. For instance, if you normally grab a cup of coffee on your way out the door, drive the same route to work every day, park in the same spot every day, cook the same 5 meals every week…

Get up 10 minutes early and enjoy your cup of coffee on the patio, maybe while reading a devotional. Drive a different route to work and see the world from a different perspective. Park in a spot further away from the door and take a few extra steps to get to the office. Try a new recipe this week.

When we begin something new, it is because it brings us joy. Overtime, we may change; things change. What brought us joy may no longer bring us joy. Take some time to think about what seems old and rote, replace it with something new that brings you joy in this time of your life.

1. Take inventory of your spiritual tools: Some of us say we have a prayer closet like a space where we go to pray. For some, it is a physical space; for others, it is a space in our heart. What we do there differs. We may read the Bible or a devotional book like the Daily Bread or the Upper Room. We may read a chapter of an inspirational book. We may meditate or just simply talk to God.

Spring is a good time to look in the spiritual shed and make sure you have the tools you need to work in the garden. Do you need a new Bible? Maybe you need a reading plan to have a focused effort to read through certain topics or Scriptures or the whole Bible. Do you need a new devotional book? Maybe you’ve been reading the Upper Room for several years and it’s time for a new format. There are devotionals you can get sent to your e-mail inbox. Do you need some new reading material? Maybe you’ve read everything by Joyce Meyer and Joel Osteen. Perhaps consider something by Jen Hatmaker or Rob Bell.

1. Consider the people in your life: There are 2 great Christian counselors named Henry Cloud and John Townsend. They are known for their book Boundaries, which is a bit of a text book for understanding boundaries in relationships. They wrote a lesser known book called Safe People. It’s about how to determine if relationships are good for you and those which are not so that you can surround yourself with safe people. Not all people build you up and so not all people are good to have in your life.

Their book is old, but the concept is even older. Rumi was a 13th century Persian poet and philosopher. He said, “Set your life on fire and seek those who fan your flames.” We should be surrounding ourselves with people who challenge us to grow, who encourage us to seek our higher purpose, who don’t let us settle for good enough, who build us up.

Think about the people in your life and the people who used to be in your life. Think about why people left your life – it may have been best for you that they left. It may too be time for some of the people in your life to move on so you can make room for new people who will fan your flame.

1. Purge physical stuff that holds negative memories: There is a book called The Life Changing Magic of Tidying up. I haven’t read this one but I read a cousin of the book. The idea is pick up everything in your home, piece by piece and hold it for a moment. If it brings you joy, keep it. If it makes you feel negative, get rid of it. For instance, the old bank statements. Toss them. Love letters. Keep them. The jeans that you hope will fit again some day but taunt you from the back of the closet that you’re not getting into them today. Toss them. A picture of your grandparents. Keep. A picture of your ex. Toss.

You get the idea. Plus, you can donate all the stuff you’re tossing to the rummage sale.

When you’re done with your Spring cleaning, you’ll have a lot of empty space to fill up with new friends, new memories, new stuff, new tools. God can fill you up with all those things in this season of new beginnings, new growth and new life.

Now, one last thing. Part of Spring is planting flowers. When you’re planting flowers, you also need a shovel and some good dirt. If you’re planting a bulb, it needs to go deep in the soil and be fully covered. It needs buried in the darkness to come to life.

If, things seem to be piling on you right now and you’re frustrated with how much you’re getting dumped on you, all those other Spring cleaning tips may not work, because, it may be that God is burying you in the spiritual sense. He may be covering you in soil so you can experience growth. It’s an unfortunate part of growth. Not all growth is easy. Some growth requires a bulb to be planted in the darkness and covered in fresh dirt.

The ancient people believed that the seeds you buried were dead and they came to life after being buried. They didn’t know that within those seeds they carried life that just needed some good nutrients to become what God had created it to be and put within it. If you’re being buried, enjoy some rest. You’ll need to be well rested for the growth coming in due season.