

With Jesus pt7

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With Jesus / Luke 15

I made an interesting discovery a week or 2 ago. There is a section of scripture in the Gospel of Luke known as the Gospel for Outcasts. I had not heard this designation before, but when I went to it and began to read it, it really clicked. This whole passage is about how Jesus is looking for those who are lost...even those who have strayed away from the faith or the household of God.

Luke Context

Three parables follow that serve both as a defense of Jesus' ministry to such outcasts (cf. 14:15–24) and an appeal to his opponents to join in celebrating their entrance into the kingdom

So today, I want us to walk thru this passage and see the heart of God for those who have wandered away. We need to have His heart for them...rather than making them outcasts, making them a part of our passion and mission that Jesus has set us on.

(Read [Luke 15:1-7](#))

So the first thing to get your head around is what sparks this whole narrative. The Pharisees are salty that Jesus is spending His time with the “wrong” crowd. These people who Jesus is with are sinners and Jesus not only “receives” them He eats with them!

In Jesus time, meals were serious business. Eating with someone gave them legitimacy. It associated you with them- for good or for evil. So Jesus, in sitting down with these people who were not in compliance with the laws was just as guilty as they were in the eyes of the Pharisees.

Luke Comments

This shared activity implied acceptance of such people as one's "brothers and sisters" (cf. Acts 11:3 and the explanation in 11:4–18, esp. 11:18; cf. also Gal 2:12–13). To "break bread" with someone had important consequences. Even as contact with lepers (Luke 5:12–16) brought ritual uncleanness, **so in the minds of the Pharisees contact with tax collectors and sinners brought moral (as well as ritual) uncleanness.**

We will see some of the same pushback today- just in different ways and with different sins. You can welcome a glutton to come to your church or an alcoholic. But someone who is SSA or trans or a who voted for someone else? Many people in churches across the spectrum would see this as high heresy...**we select the sins we find acceptable and those Jesus cannot forgive.**

But that is not Jesus' way. He is not excusing or condoning their sins by being with them. He is seeking them. Which so many in our churches have quit doing. **When we reduce who the church can reach based on a set of criteria we define, we have ceased being a church and become something else.** And it is not what is pictured here in [Luke 15](#).

Luke Comments

Yet Jesus associated with such people to offer them salvation through repentance and faith, not to participate in their sin.

So let's look at this first story and see what Jesus does for the lost sheep. He leaves the place of comfort and safety and goes out into the wild. And when He finds the sheep He brings it back to the fold.

When we see someone who is outside the Kingdom, it is our job, our mandate, to go to them. Not expect them to stumble on to us.

And look even further, we are to bear them back once they are found. See for so many years, **we would seek and find, but not connect.** We cannot introduce people to Jesus without introducing them to the family! They have to be brought in.

Luke Comments

This aspect of the parable's picture expresses the shepherd's loving care and has been a favorite artistic theme through the centuries. Frequently a sheep that became lost was weak and could not keep up with the rest of the flock. Thus the shepherd needed to carry it on his shoulders.

Can you imagine the condition of a lost sheep? Thorns and wounds and dirt...they need to be helped and healed and unsnarled. Bringing a lost sheep back to the fold means the work is starting, not that it is done!

Let's look further. Go to **v8-10.**

Jesus does not just go and find. He works til the job is done and He illuminates the place where He is working.

We are not just going to see someone who needs Jesus or who has walked away from the faith come back on a one time effort. **We have to be committed. We are seeking life change- heart surgery- adoption- not a verbal assent, but a real conversion.** That is going to be long and messy.

And we will need light to make those truths known. Jesus is that light and His Word is how it is revealed. **We are not trying to talk someone into the Kingdom. We are showing them the path so they can decide to walk it.**

Luke Comments

Light a lamp, sweep ... search. These are necessary actions to find a lost coin in a dark, windowless house.

So often we hesitate to engage in the hard work of soul winning because we feel inadequate. Quite the contrary, we are inadequate in our own efforts, but Jesus is enough and He does the drawing. We are the conduit and our calling is to be faithful in the work leaving the results to Him.

Now the last part of this chapter is familiar to many of us. Look at verses 11-32.

Most of the time when I have addressed this passage I have talked about the son's journey to repentance. And I think that is important, but given the overall context of the chapter I want you to note a couple of other things, that tie in with the previous parts of Jesus teaching.

First, note the faithfulness of God in this passage. **Look at verse 20- while he was still a long way off...the Father was looking for His son's return. He was anticipating it. He never gave up on His son.**

God has not given up on you or anyone else. He is still anticipating our return, our reunion, our repentance. God is not looking to make us "work for it." He is ready at the first sign of repentance to run to us to help us complete the journey.

Maybe you need to take that first step today. Recognize where you are and finally know where you could be! And start home.

Church in the same way, **we should be looking for signs of repentance from those who we know are far from God.** We should rush to them when they start to turn their eyes towards Jesus.

And notice one other thing. God forgives and restores. He receives the son's repentance as enough. He does not make him "prove it." He takes the repentance at face value and lavishes on him all the benefits of the Kingdom.

Luke Comments

Throwing aside...behavioral conventions, Jesus has the father run to his son in order to show God's love, joy, and eagerness to receive outcasts

Luke Comments

"Threw his arms around him" is literally fell on his neck (cf. Acts 20:37; Gen 33:4; 45:14–15). This action shows the father's loving acceptance of his son

Luke Comments

The father is so eager to receive him that the young man cannot complete his prepared speech

We do not put people into spiritual probation. We bring them into the family. We welcome them with open arms and celebrate what God has done!

Luke Comments

Best robe. The best, not the former robe he left behind. This refers to the robe reserved for notable guests.

Ring. Through the ring the father bestows his authority upon his son. Compare 1 Macc 6:15.

Sandals. Sandals were a luxury, and servants did not wear them. The son is not, however, to be treated as a servant. He is to wear sandals. These individual details in the parable are not to be allegorized in order to have them correspond to some spiritual reality but are only meant to reveal the father's full acceptance of his son

Lastly, I want you to look at verses 6b-7, 9b-10, and 22-24. In every case when what is lost is found, the reaction is celebration. So should it be in the church. **We should celebrate every time someone comes home. No matter where they are in their journey.** We join with heaven in celebrating them.

Luke Context

The picture part of the parable clearly refers to Jesus' ministering to Israel's outcasts and to their entering God's kingdom. Through the parable Jesus both censured and appealed to his opponents: ***"The lost of Israel are finding forgiveness; sinners are finding salvation. It is time to rejoice. In heaven God rejoices over this. Why won't you enter into this joy?"***

Luke Comments

Dead. In the picture part of the parable this is a metaphor for "assumed physically dead" or "missing from the family unit," but in the reality part of the parable this refers to being "spiritually dead," i.e., dead in trespasses and sins.

Alive. In the picture part this is a metaphor for "present again in the family"; in the reality part, for "saved," i.e., possessing life in God's kingdom.

Lost and is found. This ties this parable to the preceding two (cf. 15:6, 9) and to the conclusion of this parable

How can you seek the outcast? Where do you need to be more diligent? How do we need to celebrate what God is doing?