

## Who's Your One?

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January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Would you open your Bibles to Luke chapter 15. Luke chapter 15. If there were some way that we could find a celebration and excitement meter and put it in this room over these last few weeks, I'd have to say we've been in the red zone a lot. We began meeting in here December the 15th and we have seen God work in a mighty way. Just the transition into the room, adjusting to this room, the response as we've come to response times, seeing people move, seeing people publicly profess their faith in Jesus. Seeing people baptized. The praise through songs and prayer, your the encouragement toward one another, just interacting with people in the halls and here in this room. I don't know if you can tell, but I am having the time of my life preaching in these days. I love preaching in this room. I love that we have the book. I love that we're able to open God's word together and I'm just really thankful for what we're able to experience here.

It's good to celebrate. You might think about where we've been for a few weeks and realize that we're not in some kind of sermon series in these days. So far we're not working our way through a book of the Bible. There hasn't been a big title published for this six week series that we're doing. Carla commented to me yesterday, she said, "What are you preaching tomorrow? I'm not sure I like not knowing where you're headed week after week. And I said, "Well that's the reality. That's true." And for several weeks I just wanted to pray and listen to the Lord and see what he had to say to us and try to come before you and deliver what he's saying in my heart. And that he would just lead us week by week for a season here. And I think back on what we've done, we've talked about reading the word and having a plan for reading the word. We've talked about seeking his kingdom, pursuing his kingdom, pursuing him first and his righteousness. Last week, we talked about the work and person in place of the Holy Spirit. We can be baptized in the Spirit and filled with the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. Therefore, we can produce the fruit of the spirit. In the last few days, there's a question I believe the Lord's put on my heart and it goes along with this idea of celebration and it would be this question, what causes a celebration in heaven?

What causes a celebration in heaven? I think a lot of what we've done here that heaven is honored. Jesus is honored, God is honored, but there some specific things that God's word says causes heaven to celebrate. And you have your Bibles open to Luke 15 and many of you would be familiar enough with God's word to know that Luke 15 tells us in three stories what heaven celebrates. Let me ask you this morning, what is heaven celebrating? Talk to me. Anybody. New believers. What did I hear? The lost being found. It's right there.

Luke 15, I want to read the first seven verses, and we see what causes heaven to celebrate. I want to read these verses for this reason. What we've talked about in reading the word and pursuing his kingdom and being filled with the spirit and walking in the spirit, in a lot of ways, those in my heart felt like right where we needed to be, but it felt a lot about us. And we could go on week after week after week talking about us and what God's done for us and what we

have in salvation. There just seems this week that God is saying, turn a little bit, turn your hearts and realize, yes, there's a lot you can celebrate about us, but it's time to turn your gaze toward others. It's time to look towards others. It's time for you to take what you're celebrating in your heart and your life and see that others are able to be a part of this same celebration. You need to see what heaven celebrates over those who don't need to repent.

Look in verse one, Luke 15 verse one says,

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup> "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup> And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' <sup>7</sup> Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Last phrase, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.

In this story that Jesus tells us that there are three character sets. You have tax collectors and sinners. You have Pharisees and scribes, and in between the two of those character sets you have Jesus. The tax collectors and sinners were viewed as the outcast. They were those that people tried to hide themselves from, blind themselves from, they were objects of anger. Tax collectors were objects of anger by the community. Sinners were seen as those who in their culture were law breakers, particularly God's law breakers. They were considered in many cases unclean, not worthy of fellowship, would create sin in the life of other people if they interacted with them. And then the second character set, the Pharisees and scribes, these were the law keepers and the law writers. This was the law police. They were on guard at all times, watching for something that might violate their rules. They were religious. And then there was Jesus. There were three actions by these three character sets, the tax collectors and sinners who are considered outcast or actually described here as drawing near to hear Jesus. And just for a moment, pause long enough to think about how beautiful that is. The tax collectors and sinners who had been isolated by so many saw Jesus as someone they felt like they could draw near to. "We can get to this guy. He's speaking to us. He's got something that we need to hear." So their actions were drawing near.

The Pharisees and scribes, their action was one word given here in Luke, and that was grumbling. The tax collectors and sinners wanted to draw near to Jesus, and the Pharisees and scribes responded by grumbling, complaining, and whining. They were in a tizzy. They were having a fit, they were upset, and their accusations were that this man receives sinners and eats with them. It's just like a cloud of dust in their stock. And then here's Jesus, tax collectors and sinners drawing near to hear him, Pharisees and scribes grumbling about what Jesus is doing. And then Jesus receiving sinners. And there's one reaction, the reaction of Jesus when they say that he receives sinners and eats with them, and what did Jesus do? There's a million different things he could have done, but the one thing that he did was he told them a story. Can you just picture being there? And Jesus is just listening to them complain and him just kind of raising his

hands saying, come here. Let me tell you a story. Let me tell you a story, and he lays out these few verses here, this story of the owner of sheep and a herd of a hundred sheep.

Let's break it apart a little bit. He told them this parable, verse four, "What man of you?" He plays to their logic. He plays to their reasoning, and he says, you know what it's like. You own some sheep, either you do or you've seen people who own some sheep, you've got some things that are yours, and what man of you? Surely, having a hundred sheep, if he's lost, one of them, does he not leave the 99 in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 100 sheep, one is lost. That means you've got 99 sheep accounted for, one sheep that is not accounted for. You got one owner, I don't believe it mentions that he's a shepherd. He just in the story, it's the owner of the sheep, and what does he do? You got 99, he takes the 99 and he leaves them in open country. It's a picture of him saying, you are safe, you're good. You're all together right here. I've got business to take care of. And he goes and he goes after the one that is lost. He leaves, he goes after the one that is lost.

Let me ask you this question. How many did he go after? How long did he go after the one? Until he found him. He leaves the 99 and he goes after and very specifically the story is he goes after the, say it with me, the one. And he goes after the one until he finds it. How many? One. How long? Until he finds it. And I just respond to this with, how come? How many? It was one. and how long was it? Until he found it. How come? Because the one is valuable. Valuable. He's play into their understanding, their reasoning, their logic. You know that there's 99 they're safe. You're not going to just ignore the one, you're going to go after the one because that one is valuable. It's precious to the owner, it's important to the owner.

There's some folklore around Watkinsville, some stories that just come up from time to time that we tell and we enjoy laughing at. One of those stories of folklore and I believe a lot of it's true and maybe there's a little bit of exaggeration in the story. But the story goes that a few years ago we were having middle school Bible school at night, vacation Bible school. There were 80 middle schoolers, they left the property to go to the Varsity for an outing to eat and come back to the church. Some parents drove some kids or you had a leader that was volunteering. They got ready to leave the Varsity and the parents started asking, there are 80 kids. How many do we got? And the leader that went with them said, I believe we got about 80. The story goes that some of the parents spoke up, "So what do you mean, about eighty? He said, well, working with middle schoolers, if you get close, you've done pretty good. And we laugh at that because we know we're not leaving without all 80. No matter how hard it is to keep up with them, no matter how hard it is to find them. And that's the point of this story right here in this piece is that he's saying you got 99 but the fact that one is missing, you're not going to ignore them. You're not going to leave until you find them. You're going to go after them. And then look at what happens. He says, he goes until he finds it. And then verse five, "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing."

How many of you have an artistic image, a painting that comes to your mind of a shepherd walking with a sheep on his shoulder, walking back toward the herd? Any of you have that image come to mind? It's there. We've seen it. That image strikes a mark in our mind and heart because we see that as a caring owner. He didn't put a rope around his neck and come dragging him back into the herd. He didn't bring him back, kicking him and punching him and rolling him

in. He finds him, he puts him on his shoulder and he carries him back safely to the herd. It's a picture of truth. It's a picture of care. It's a picture of compassion. It's a picture of intentionality. It's a picture of diligence. It's a picture of concern. It brings them back in with love and care. Last Sunday, I grabbed some lunch and I drove to Birmingham and spent Sunday night at a church there listening, Monday morning at a church there listening. I heard Johnny Hunt preach Sunday night, Charles Billingsley sing Sunday night and then Monday morning I listened to Katherine Renfro and H.B Charles, James Merit, Kevin Ham. It was a time of worship and being fed from the word. On Sunday night, it's a room shaped like this, only much bigger, over 2000 people in this room. I was sitting in the upper seats, like some of you are this morning, looking down on the floor seats and at the stage. Pastor Johnny was preaching and on the floor about five rows in from the back, Johnny goes quiet and all of a sudden right in the middle of the row, this man just explodes out of his seat. I'm looking right there, and when he explodes out of his seat in one full motion, he wraps his arm around a kid and just takes him like this. And as soon as his arm comes around that kid, that kid pointed his head toward heaven and started screaming with every breath. I mean, it was piercing. His head was screaming and his feet were kicking, and we're just watching this. I mean, Johnny can preach, but he had nothing on what was going on right here. It's like a three or four year old kid, he's just kicking and squirming and this guy's pretty big and he's trying to get through the aisle and get over to the aisle and he's moving. By the time he gets to the end of the aisle, the kids' shirts up around his neck, his whole back is showing, his Superman underwear is hanging out of his pants. He's just kicking with all his might, just screaming. The guy gets out in the aisle and he does that thing where, you know, he re-grips and in my mind, I'm just sweating. And I'm sweating first of all because I got five kids, and I've been there. But then I just start laughing. And it was so funny. It was hilarious. Some of you right now are so nervous or you think your kids going to go crazy any second now. It was so funny. It's so funny because all my kids are grown. We're done with that.

But also, I'm thinking, was it worth it? He goes out of the room and it gets quiet and Pastor Johnny keeps preaching. About 10 minutes later, the man comes in without the kid. He just comes walking in like everything's fine. Sits down beside the mom and another kid. You do them math, I mean, where's the kid? I'm just thinking he's tied to a tree outside. He found an open door, he just put him in the baptism closet, you know? He's like, locked him in the car. You stay here, crack the window, I'll be back. You know? I was just like, where's the kid?

Now, how different would it have been, somehow, some way, if in about 10 minutes the father came back with a kid on his shoulder, and the dad's just stroking his back. Patting on him. And then you see him sit down beside his dad and he just leans his head over against his dad. The picture here is of Jesus. It's of the heavenly father. It's God's work of one who's lost and going to get them, bringing them back. Don't miss the compassion of the Father, the shepherd, the owner. I would say to you, if you're here today and you're lost without Jesus Christ, that the Heavenly Father is not out to get you. The Heavenly Father is looking for you, and he wants to put you on his shoulder and bring you home safe.

And then what's the result of that? He says, he calls together as friends and his neighbors. Certainly it could have been good for the sheep, but the celebration happens with friends and neighbors and he says, rejoice with me that I have found my sheep that was lost. Just so I'll tell you, there will be more joy in heaven. He's showing the grumblers the value of the lost. I'm

finding the lost. We know the background that Jesus came, he says, on mission to seek and save that which was lost. And Jesus is saying the celebration in heaven happens when one sinner repents. Yeah, there's 99 gathered in a room. There's a thousand gathered in a room, but listen, you want to make heaven celebrate, go find the lost and when you find them, bring them home.

That's what makes heaven celebrate. So real quick, we just mentioned three things to you here and we'll wrap up. Number one, we've got to work on our invitation list. We've got to work on our invitation list. Do we have on our invitation list, the tax collectors and the sinners. Are we looking around us, do we know are around us those who are lost? Are we paying attention to the lostness around us? Do you have a family member, do you have a friend who needs Jesus? At your meals, at your parties, at your gatherings? Coming to church, some opportunity for people to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Who's on your invitation list? Let's not get settled. Let's not get at ease in Zion and just think we're okay and miss the lost.

Number two, we've got to work on our intentionality efforts. The way we're going to find the lost is by being intentional. It's not going to be by accident. The enemy has too good a strategy to hinder us in finding the lost. We've got to be intentional. Look at, he says here about this owner, he says he leaves the 99 in the open country and he goes after the one that is lost. Goes after the one, that's intentionality. And I'd ask you, who are you going after? In your conversations, in your praying, in your relationships? Who are you going after? We've got to be intentional in looking for opportunities to take the good news of Jesus to the lost and with our opportunities, where do they come from? We either make them or take them. We make opportunities. We take opportunities. There are people around us.

Now listen, when we think about being intentional, the goal is rescue and repentance, not relationship. If you've drifted off, you can quote me, don't misquote me. Listen, the goal is rescue and repentance, not relationship. Now you may not have rescue and repentance without relationship, but you have not won the lost by simply having a relationship with them. And in our world right now, where we're so easily convinced that the church is judgmental, it's easy for us to celebrate as a win the fact that we add a beer with someone one night without judging them. And miss the fact that we have never shared the truth with them. It's easy for us to get to a point where we go to be a part of activities that we know in our own life are sinful, believing that we are winning by building a relationship with them. And for some reason we've taken on our back the responsibility to redeem the judgmental reputation of some church you've been a part of. Jesus Christ received sinners. Jesus Christ pointed to the celebration being that the sinner had repented and come home. Yes, build relationships, receive sinners, interact with people that need Jesus, but don't forget the good news in the relationship.

Number three, we've got to work on our inclusion attitudes. Two things can easily happen, if not both. We can excuse sin or we can exclude sin. We can excuse what's going on in people's lives or we can exclude people because of what's going on in their lives. To excuse people would be to just say, you know, that's just the way people are these days. That's just the culture. That's just life. That's the way people are going to live. You can't do anything about it. I hope it works out for them. In the end, they're good people and maybe Jesus will take them home.

That's excusing. Jesus did not accept their sin, he received sinners but he called him to repentance. Or we can exclude and that's where we become kind of like the Pharisees and the scribes where we say, "You know what? They made their choices. That's the way they want to live. Not going to be a part of that. Just have it your way." And turn a blind eye, as you say, to those that are lost. I believe that these seven verses of Luke 15 call us to be invitational to sinners, to be intentional toward those who need to come home, and to not excuse our exclude, but to engage those who need a Savior. And even as I say these three things, the reality is right here in Watkinsville, standing on my front porch, with my 53 year old weak arm, I could hit 10 adults with a rock who need Jesus. Who's on your invitation list. The greatest celebration will be when one of those lost in my neighborhood come to know Jesus.

We're going to close with a song this morning and I want to read the words of this song to you. The reason we're singing is because I believe it reminds us of what we have in Jesus. It's so rich, what we have in Jesus that my hope and desire would be is that we could not help but talk to others about him. You know, last week I talked to you about being baptized in the spirit, filled with the spirit, walking in the spirit, bearing the fruit of the spirit. Do you know how you can know? Do you know how you can know that you have been baptized and filled with the Spirit? Do you know how you can know that you are walking in the spirit? You know how you can know you're bearing the fruit of the spirit? You want to talk about Jesus more.

Friends, if your life is not thinking about Jesus and wanting to talk about Jesus and wanting to tell others about Jesus, then it's not the Holy Spirit that has filled you. The work of the Holy Spirit is to bear witness to Jesus Christ. And when we're filled with the spirit, when we're filled with the Holy Spirit of God, we're going to want what the spirit wants. And can you imagine today, if we had invited the Holy Spirit to be the preacher today, what do you think his topic would have been? I bet he would have stood before us and said, "Today I want to talk to you about time management." I bet if the Holy spirit was here today, he'd want to talk to us about Jesus. Let's lift up Jesus. Let's tell people about Jesus. Jesus said to the disciples, Go to Jerusalem and wait. The Holy spirit will come upon you and you will receive power and you shall be my what? Witnesses. Let's stand to our feet. Let's sing of what we have in Jesus. Let God move us to be others minded. Invite people to Jesus, to go and find them, bring them home.