

The Joy of Heaven

Luke 15:1-10

Birds of a feather flock together

We tend to gather with people like us
When do we do this? Why?

Diffusion

Random movement makes things evenly spread out

First responders

Go to the need

What is God's design for His people?

Pharisees' view: God wants us to stay away from "sinners"

"Blessed is the one who does not
walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers..." *Psalm 1:1*

"Anything that an unclean person touches becomes unclean, and anyone who touches it becomes unclean till evening." *Numbers 19:22*

"Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the Lord's house." *Isaiah 52:22*

Luke 15:1-10

1-2: The religious elite judged the "sinners"

What makes someone a "sinner"? (in their view)

Being guilty of certain publicly known sins
Not being as "religious" as the elite

These "sinners" were doing what real disciples do

Came near to hear Jesus teach
"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." *Luke 14:35b*
This hearing includes taking Jesus' words to heart
"All" of them were regularly coming

The religious elite were doing what real sinners do

Grumbling about God's ways

So Jesus taught both groups...

3-7: Shepherd searches until he finds, then calls for joy

A good shepherd searches for 1 sheep in 100

Diligent searching: "until he finds it"
Sheep is found and cared for

Joy: shepherd and God and all heaven

Calls for earth to join the rejoicing

Also: rejoice in a good shepherd who searches until the sheep is found

Those who saw themselves as righteous needed to repent!

8-10: Woman searches until she finds, then calls for joy

Archaeologists have found coins caught in cracks of stone floors!

Identical pattern

One lost / Search / Find / Joy / Together / Heaven

Loss prompts diligent searching (detail in story)

Joy comes with finding what was lost

The Big Idea

**The joy of rescuing people
motivates God & God's people
to diligently pursue people who are far from God
until they are brought home**

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10)

because “there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” (Luke 15:10)

Touching what is “unclean”

Pharisees' view

If you are too close to “unclean” people, they'll make you unclean as well
So, stay away from bad people & pursue good people

Jesus' view

The holiness of God needs no protection
When Jesus gets close to unclean people, He makes them clean and whole
So Jesus pursues unclean people to heal them

Application

Enter into the joy of God by turning to Jesus for healing

Jesus' goal is not:

find and reward people who are good

Jesus' goal is:

find and love people who...

are far from God

need healing and forgiveness

Do you need healing and forgiveness?

Turn to Jesus (repent) for He is right at your door

“Lord, save me!”

This begins a journey of being transformed by God

And God + heaven + you will rejoice in the lost being found!

Take the healing presence of God where His healing is needed

Like first responders: go where the help is needed

Wherever you go...

take the healing, grace-filled presence of Jesus with you

The fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance [patient endurance of trouble or ill-treatment], kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control *Galatians 5:22-23*

take God's will: the justice, truth, and mercy of God

take and live out this Good News

God rejoices in finding those who need finding

And intentionally go where God is needed

work, school, neighborhood, hobbies, ...

whenever you have the choice to locate, for a short time or a long time

And invite people to be among God's people

“But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted [by the Holy Spirit] of sin and are brought under judgment by all, as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”” *1 Corinthians 14:24-25*

God is the seeker

Jesus said: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” *Luke 19:10*

Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” *Luke 5:31-32*

These parables show God as the “seeker” ... Clearly as a model for His people

Core Value Proposal: Radical Grace and Radical Obedience

We are committed to building a community that practices radical grace while calling our people to radical obedience to Christ. In radical grace, we welcome people to come as they are, [and we go to people where they are,] and we are committed to building relationships with people as Jesus did, including with those who are often judged by others, just as Jesus welcomed sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors (Luke 5:29-32). We also call our people to radical obedience to Jesus in all parts of our lives, conforming to His call to holiness and to sacrificial service (Luke 5:27-28; 9:23-26). And we recognize that this road to radical obedience is lifelong and requires grace, patience, perseverance, and mutual encouragement (Hebrews 10:23-25; 12:7-13).

Radical grace and radical obedience meet
in the call to seek diligently those who are in trouble and distant from Jesus

Taking action...

Who in your life might God be calling you, and using you, to bring into the healing presence of God?

- Identify** 3 people (plus or minus)
- Pray** "God, please open their hearts to You, and please use me to bring Your presence near to them"
- Take action** to move closer to them with God's presence
- Invite** them into God's presence among His people
- Create** a recurring weekly calendar event: IPTI + 3 names

Reflection Questions for later today or this week..

1. The heart of God is to rejoice when someone who is lost is found. When you are aware of your own sin and failings, what do you expect God's reaction would be when you cry out to Him? Why is that? Will you believe Jesus' words that the heart of God is to rejoice when a sinner turns back to Him?
2. The religious elite in Jesus' day were quick to judge people who were tax collectors or prostitutes, or who failed to follow their many detailed religious rules. They tried to avoid these "unclean" people. Who are the people you are tempted to judge and try to avoid?
3. Who are three (plus or minute) people in your life who need the healing presence of God in their lives, or who are living life without Him? What steps can you take to move closer to them with God's presence?
4. Sometimes situations that need God's presence (where the fruit of the Spirit is lacking) steal away from us the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. What steps can we do to walk in step with the Spirit so that His fruit is evident even in these situations?