

LUKE 15: 1-10

Topic: GOD'S PLAN - REACHING THE LOST

At times we probably feel it would be so much easier if we could be like Lucy in the old Peanuts cartoon:

Lucy says to Charlie Brown, "I would have made a great evangelist."

Charlie Brown answers, "Is that so?"

She says, "Yes, I convinced that boy in front of me in school that my religion is better than his religion."

Charlie Brown asked, "Well, how did you do that?"

And Lucy answers, "I hit him over the head with my lunch box."

Bruce Wilkinson has written an excellent little book called *The Prayer of Jabez*.

In the book, Wilkinson explains the reluctance believers have toward having a greater influence for Christ in their world.

He explains this reluctance by using two mathematic equations.

The first equation describes the reluctant believer.

It looks like this.

"My abilities + experience + training + my personality and appearance + my past + the expectations of others = my assigned territory" (Wilkinson, p. 40).

The prayer would sound something like this. "Lord, please use my abilities, such as they are.

Give me the experience and training I need.

Make me a better person and don't let anyone find out what I'm really like.

Help me to be what everyone expects me to be so I can have more influence."

Wilkinson writes, "Our God specializes in working through normal people who believe in a supernatural God who will do His work through them . . .

That means God's math would look more like this: My willingness and weakness + God's will and supernatural power = my expanded territory" (Wilkinson, p. 41).

This mornings text:

15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.

2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

3 So he told them this parable:

4 "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?"

5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 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.'

7 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.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?"

9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'

10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

TRANSITION THOUGHT:

Our text for today speaks of Jesus as the one who welcomes sinners and tax collectors and is ridiculed by Pharisees and the teachers of the Law.

I don't know exactly where we fit into the text, but I have a good idea.

We have bought into two models concerning reaching out.

The first is the model Lucy uses, brute force.

Not to demean Islam or Muslims, but they say, "If you can't win them by the Koran, win them by the sword."

The second model was the equation Wilkinson shared first:

"My abilities + experience + training + my personality and appearance + my past + the expectations of others = my assigned territory" (Wilkinson, p. 40).

Both of these models don't work and so most of us don't become working models!!

The reality of it all is that this is God's business and we have started acting as if it is our business.

Our text teaches us the reality of our God and of His desire to see all come to know Him.

THESIS SENTENCE:

REACHING THE LOST IS GOD'S PLAN!

SO WHAT DOES REACHING THE LOST LOOK LIKE SINCE IT IS GOD'S PLAN?

I. A SEEKING SAVIOR SHOWS THE WAY

A. A seeking Savior sets the example

1. Where did it all begin, according to our text?

2. Jesus is hanging with the "OUT" crowd.

3. According to the Religious folks of the day, Jesus "WELCOMED" these sinners and even dared to eat with them!!

4. What kind of "Holy Man" is this?

B. A seeking Savior tells the story

1. Again, just like last week, Jesus breaks down the truth until even we can get it, or does He?

2. The lost sheep and the lost coin share one motif, something is lost and there is a need to find it.

3. In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus makes a statement.

He states, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them.

Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?"

4. Is this what a good shepherd would do?

Maybe not! However. Jesus is making a point!

Would you really leave 99 sheep in the open country with no shepherd to protect them from wolves and from straying? Probably not!

Jesus is still making a point!

5. In the parable of the lost coin, the amount, ten silver coins is the equivalent of about ten days worth of wages.

Scholars note that it would take about three months to save this amount.

AND BY ALL MEANS, IF YOU LOST A DAYS WAGES, YOU WOULD LOOK HIGH AND LOW UNTIL YOU FOUND IT!

6. Still, Jesus is making a point!!

Do you get it??

AN ASIDE:

DID YOU NOTICE THE EFFORT TAKEN TO FIND WHAT WAS LOST?

I MENTIONED THE LEAVING OF THE 99, BUT WHAT OF SWEEPING THE HOUSE?

This is all about an all out concerted effort!!

C. A seeking Savior sets a contrast

1. What is explicit in the first three verses of our text, and notably verse three, is that the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law were in disagreement with Jesus practice of associating with "SINNERS"!

2. What is implicit in the text is that Pharisees and Teachers of the Law did not seek out "SINNERS"!

3. DO YOU GET IT!!

ILLUSTRATION:

The boss of a big company needed to call one of his employees about an urgent problem with one of the main computers.

He dialed the employee's home telephone number and was greeted with a child's whispered, "Hello?"

Feeling put out at the inconvenience of having to talk to a youngster, the boss asked, "Is your Daddy home?" "

Yes," whispered the small voice. "May I talk with him?" the man asked.

To the surprise of the boss, the small voice whispered, "No."

Wanting to talk with an adult, the boss asked, "Is your Mommy there?" "

Yes," came the answer. "May I talk with her?"

Again, the small voice whispered, "No."

Knowing that it was not likely that a young child would be left home alone, the boss decided he would just leave a message with the person who should be there watching over the child. "

Is there any one there besides you?" the boss asked the child.

"Yes," whispered the child, "a policeman."

Wondering what a cop would be doing at his employee's home, the boss asked, "May I speak with the policeman?" "

No, he is busy," whispered the child. "

Busy doing what?" asked the boss.

'Talking to Daddy and Mommy and the Fireman," came the whispered answer.

Growing concerned and even worried as he heard what sounded like a helicopter through the earpiece on the phone, the boss asked, "What is that noise?" "

A hello-copper," answered the whispering voice. "What is going on there?" asked the boss, now alarmed.

In an awed whispering voice, the child answered, "The search team just landed the hello-copper!"

Alarmed, concerned and more than just a little frustrated, the boss asked, "Why are they there?"

Still whispering, the young voice replied (along with a muffled giggle), "They are looking for me!"

II. A CELEBRATING SAVIOR SHOWS THE WHY

A. Celebrating means throwing a party

1. What did the "MALE" Shepherd do when he found the lost sheep?

2. First, he throws that stinking sheep up on his shoulders and he does so joyfully!!

What would you have done to that stinkin' sheep?!?

3. Then he throws a party and invites his friends and neighbors and says, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep."

4. How much would one sheep be worth?

How much would it cost to throw a party for your friends and neighbors? DO YOU GET IT?

5. JESUS AIN'T DONE YET (PARDON MY GRAMMER)!

6. The coin is found!

So what does this "Woman" do, she calls all here friends and neighbors together and throws a party!

7. What would it cost to throw a party for your friends and neighbors?

What is one day's wage worth?

Do you get it??

AN ASIDE HERE: JESUS USES A SHEPHERD AND A WOMAN TO MAKE HIS POINT.

These were two groups of people that received little recognition in their culture.

Why might Jesus have used these insignificant people as his model? DO YOU GET IT??

B. Celebrating means getting all of heaven involved

1. Did you notice whom else wants to party?
2. Concerning the lost sheep Jesus says, "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven..."
3. And with the lost coin Jesus says, "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God..."
4. The bottom line here is that all of heaven gets involved when the lost are found!!

ILLUSTRATION: Conrad Hyers in his book, *And God Created Laughter* tells a of an 8 year old girl who wrote to Abraham Lincoln, who was then running for President suggesting that he grow a beard.

In her opinion, Lincoln would stand a better chance of election if he grew one to hide the homeliness of his face.

Lincoln could have been offended, but instead he answered her letter personally and thanked her for her suggestion, furthering adding that he'd like to visit with her when his campaign came to her area.

On the day that Lincoln's campaign train was scheduled to pass through the town, practically the whole town was assembled at the station.

There were the leading Republicans wearing their top hats, the shiny marching band, and the townsfolk in their finest attire.

Almost everyone was there... all except the little girl.

She was left home.

After all, her father reasoned, Lincoln would be interested only in the politicians and their speeches - the votes and the voters - not the attentions of a little girl.

It so happened, however, that as the campaign train approached the town, it was forced to stop for repairs.

Lincoln, not wanting to sit in the warm train, set off across the field afoot in search of the little girl's home.

When Lincoln introduced himself at the door, the maid was speechless.

But the little girl and her playmate, the maid's daughter, welcomed him in as if they were expecting him.

The two girls had been having a pretend party, drinking pretend hot chocolate out of their small teacups and they invited Mr. Lincoln to join them.

After a while, Lincoln said he must be going, thanked them for the party, and asked them how they liked his new beard.

Then he walked to the waiting train.

When Lincoln boarded the train, it started on its way and went right through the town without stopping.

Right past all the waiting dignitaries, politicians, loud playing band and flag draped platform; right past ladies and gentlemen in their Sunday best... for Lincoln hadn't come to visit people who were putting on a show for his benefit.

He had come to visit and say thank you to a little girl who just wanted to spend time with him.

III. A SENDING SAVIOR SHOWS THE WHO

A. THE WHO OF IT ALL!

1. The who are the sinners and tax collectors
2. The who are those that have not yet repented
3. The who are those that our culture might deem insignificant
4. The who are the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law
5. The who are good church folks who haven't yet bowed to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

B. THE WHO FOR US!

1. Do you remember where it all began?
2. The key phrase might be, "MUTTERED"!
3. What was all the muttering about?

Jesus was not hanging out at church; he was just hanging out with those who needed Him, NOT WITH THE "NINETY-NINE RIGHTEOUS PERSON WHO DO NOT NEED TO REPENT!"

4. Where does this text find us as a church?'
5. Where does this text find us as individuals?

ILLUSTRATION: The Greek poet, Hosay wrote, "If you tell me who you love, I can tell you who you are."

Max Lucado a dynamic Christian author said it this way, “The sign of the saved is their love for the least”

Bill Hybels, Pastor of one of the largest churches in America echoed the thought, When he said, “We have never looked eyes with someone that did not matter to God”

And my personal favorite from the radio preacher, Dr.Charles Swindoll, “ You can tell a lot about a person by the way they treat those who can do nothing for them.”

JESUS SAYS, “SUPPOSE ONE OF YOU...”

CONCLUSION:

If the worship team would come up let me close with the following.

‘The New Testament offers a picture of God, who does not sound at all vague.

He has sent His Son to earth.

He has distinct plans for each of us personally and can communicate directly with us.

We are capable of forming a direct relationship, individually with Him, and are commanded to try.

We are told that this can be done only through his son.

And we are offered the prospect of eternal life – an afterlife in happy, blissful or glorious circumstances if we live this life in a certain manner.

Friends, if I believed that, or even a tenth of that, how could I care which version of the Bible is used?

My friends, to be totally honest with you, I would like to think that I would drop my job, sell my house, throw away all my possessions, leave my acquaintances and set out into the world burning with desire to know more and, when I had found more, to act upon it and tell others.

To a lesser degree I have attempted to comply with the Great Commission, but I realize I can and need to do much more!

Far from being puzzled that the Mormons and Adventists should knock on the door, I am unable to understand how anyone who believed that what is written in the Bible could choose to spend their waking hours in any other endeavor.’

Where do you stand today?

DO YOU GET IT??

What are you willing to do to be faithful in making disciples?

BENEDICTION: HEBREWS 13: 20—21

20 Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant,

21 equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

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Fred Fitzgerald Ph.D.