

Luke 15:1-7, "The Heart of God, Part 1"

✎ We finally get a breather here from some pretty hard-hitting messages. It's been a flood of really heavy passages, and now Luke gives us a break. We get to leave for a while the progressive narrative of Jesus' last 3 months of earthly ministry because Luke interjects Jesus' parables for the space of more than three chapters. These parables are probably not chronological but are important teachings that Jesus gave throughout His ministry and Luke uses them as an intermission from what is otherwise a tough line of teachings that we have been following. Luke picks this spot in the heart of his gospel to stress to us the heart of God. What theme is nearest and dearest to the heart of God because that one will be the one upon which we can build our entire understanding of Him. The Heart of God is expressed here in three parables that soak up an entire chapter in Luke's gospel, but they are summarized in this simple verse, Luke 19:10, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." God has a single goal and purpose for His Son, what is your single goal?

1. "To seek and to save that which was lost."

- ✓ Jesus' entire ministry is summed up in this one sentence. Jesus is the theme of the entire Bible, so this theme is the summation of the entire Bible. "What is God up to; what is God doing?," He is seeking and saving the lost. That single goal and purpose is going to be illustrated beautifully by these parables of Luke 15. It's a trilogy, a Shepherd searching for a lost sheep and how he rejoices when he finds it; a woman searching for a lost coin and how she rejoices when she finds it; a father with a lost son and how he rejoices when he finds him. These parables exist for the sole purpose of us knowing God, what is God doing? It's simple. He is seeking and saving the lost ones.

2. Recovering the lost sheep.

- ✓ In Luke 15:1-2 nothing more clearly illustrates how far the religious establishment was from the heart of God than in their attitude toward people. They were utterly out of touch with God because God by nature is a Savior. God sends His one and only Son into the world to bring His heart and purpose to bear on the world that He had created, what does He name Him?, see Matthew 1:21. Are you missing the heart of God?, John 3:16-17. Are you participating in what is the heart of God? Our God is a relentless Savior who weeps over the lost, 1st Timothy 2:3. The religious establishment wanted nothing to do with those who God wanted everything to do with, amazing! Jesus begins to work on them, Luke 15:3-4. He is already offending them by lumping them into the category of those who tend sheep. Sheep herding was the lowest profession of this society, these men all owned sheep but they did not tend sheep, it was beneath them. This is axiomatic or, in other words, "Of course you would," Luke 15:4. We think of 99 out of 100 still being a passing grade but they saw it as 1% of their business. Would you let 1% of your business be taken away without at least investigating? They worked hard to maintain their sheep and wouldn't sit idly by while one went missing, they would risk their lives for their sheep because they had put their lives into them. They all would have bought into the story because it was so common to their lives and so axiomatic.

3. Celebrating the found sheep

- ✓ Of course, you celebrated finding this sheep who was a pet to you and a source or residual income, Luke 15:5-6. What they never anticipated or would have believed to be true is that there would be more joy in heaven over one lost sinner than over 99 others who are righteous, Luke 15:7. This turns the entire story over:
 - 1) Shepherds find sheep no matter what, that's just what they do. So, wouldn't all these people they were glad wouldn't be in heaven with them? These are the ones God was finding and bringing to Himself.
 - 2) Shepherds bore the entire risk and price of finding sheep. God's salvation is free to us, but costly for Him, see Luke 19:10 and John 10:14-15.
 - 3) Shepherds celebrated found sheep. God loves sinners, and the Jew's hated them. God pays the price to bring them home, and they wouldn't lift a finger to help them. God rejoices over even one sinner who repents, but He has no joy over those who think they don't need to, "no need of repentance" was pure sarcasm!

"How is that you who claim to know God and can be so far from His heart?"
