

The Joy of Leading People to Christ

Scripture Reading — Luke 15:1-24

1Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. 2But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3Then Jesus told them this parable: 4"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? 5And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. 8"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' 10In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." 11Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. 12The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. 13"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' 20So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. —

"This son of mine ... was lost and is found." Luke 15:24

As we noted earlier this month, Jesus strings together three parables in Luke 15--about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. In each case, something valuable is lost. And when it is finally found,

people rejoice. There's intrinsic joy in helping to find lost people and bring them to Jesus. There's great delight in helping people take their next spiritual step toward God.

This is true on an individual level as we work one-on-one with people. But it's also true on a communal level as we work as a local church body to reach people for Christ. When a seeker becomes a believer or a fence-sitter becomes a follower, we all rejoice. Why? Because we are all part of Christ's search-and-rescue team. We all play a part.

Obviously we do not save anyone; only God does the saving. All we can do is bring people to the cross, invite them to the feast, and help enfold them into God's family. Just think of having someone look you in the eye and say, "God used you to bring me to himself. I needed a friend to help me to God. I needed someone whose life matched their message. And you were that person. Thanks for reaching out to me when I was going under. Thanks for all eternity." Even if just one person says this to you one time, you will never be the same again. You'll become a more motivated witness for the Lord.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, next to our own salvation, there is no greater joy than in helping others find you. Help us to be links in the chain that leads people to you. In your name, Amen.

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