

"The Heart behind the Hand"

Luke 15:1-7

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February 17, 2019

connect groups

PATH //

None of us can reach everyone. We can't touch and change every person in the world. But we can pray for, be patient with, love on, witness to, and reach just one. When we talk about our vision to reach the world, perhaps we need to think *smaller*. Maybe we should think about one person we can pursue for the glory of Jesus Christ. Today we consider that as we look at one of Jesus' most famous parables: The Parable of the Lost Sheep.

I. Running (v. 4a)

II. Reconnaissance (v. 4b)

III. Recovery (v. 5a)

IV. Rejoicing (vv. 5b-7)

POINTS //

Running

- In Proverbs 29:18, Solomon said, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (KJV). Vision is not eyesight or insight—it is the foresight of what God has called us to. We look back to see what God has done, then forward, asking, "Now what, Lord?" Many churches become more concerned with comfort over calling. The church's mission remains the same: up-reach, in-reach, and outreach.
- We must always consider the heart behind the hand—we don't just count hands, we care for hearts.
- Christians often must reach out to someone before they reach for God, offering them care and compassion, and inviting them into community.
- Jesus used parables to underscore God's love for people. The three parables in Luke 15 focus on the recovery of something lost: a sheep, a coin, and a son. These parables illustrate someone struggling to follow God, then finding hope in Him.

Reconnaissance

- The shepherd left the ninety-nine to search for the one that was lost. This shows God's love for every single person—we all matter to God.
- Ezekiel painted a similar picture: "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away" (Ezekiel 34:16). God is pictured as the tireless Shepherd—not resting until the lost are found. In God's mind, the loss of one outweighs the laxness of many.
- The idea that God seeks sinners was revolutionary and unique to the Bible.

Recovery

- All three parables in Luke 15 are about finding something that has been lost—a rescue mission; the rescue mission is salvation—the moment that God recovers what was lost. As Jesus said, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).
- We find comfort in images of Jesus as a shepherd, in knowing that Jesus is carrying us—the lost, the least, and the lonely.

- Jesus wasn't upset with the sheep; He searched for it, found it, gently lifted it up, and carried it to safety. This is a picture of God taking our burden on Himself, saving us, and bringing us home. Jesus carried your sins on a cross, and even now, He carries you.

Rejoicing

- There are two important points to notice in this parable:
 - God rejoices. He is not some stoic being, but a rejoicing Creator—He's a loving, welcoming God.
 - God rejoices with His creation—in this case, angels.
- When someone comes to God, we must remember that God is rescuing the one, and heaven is rejoicing over the one. Christians should rejoice with God and the angels. As Augustine reminds us, "God loves each of us as if there were only one of us."
- The Shepherd became a sheep to bear our sins as a sacrificial lamb.

PRACTICE //

Connect Up: What do the parables of Jesus show you about the person and work of God? In theology, one aspect of this purpose is called *divine economy*, the mission and vision of God within the Godhead. Here are a few characteristics to discuss:

- God is one in purpose. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit wants people saved.
- God is personal. He cares, loves, and demonstrates many personal attributes. What other personal attributes can you think of?
- God is perennial; He is focused and stays on target in His plans and purposes.

Connect In:

Which ministries within the local church help to underscore the truth of "the heart behind the hand"? Take a moment to discuss how each ministry is related to reaching out to people, then pray for each ministry by name and function. Some of the ministries of Calvary Church can be found here: calvaryabq.org/getinvolved.asp

Connect Out: It is often asked if the Bible calls us to pray for the unsaved. As stated in *All About Prayer*,¹ the answer is yes: "in Matthew 9:36-38, Jesus tells His disciples that there are many unsaved people

throughout the world. He encouraged them to pray that God would provide people to share the gospel with them. God desires that all people learn the truth of salvation. 1 Timothy 2:3-4 says, 'This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.'" Take a moment to pray for the one person that came to mind, asking God for you to reach out to their heart, grasping his or her hand for the kingdom.

¹ All About Prayer, "Pray for the Unsaved", <https://www.allaboutprayer.org/pray-for-the-unsaved-faq.htm>, accessed 02/18/19.