

God's Pursuit

Introduction: Do we WANT to see unbelievers in church?

- Do we want people who are searching to be welcomed here?
- Christian culture is in decline.
- Illustration = Aust. Movie “The Riddle of the Stinson” Was made in 1987 and still showed people praying around meals and over those who had died. Today it is unheard of in Australian movies.
 - Does church become my “safe place” from a culture whose values are increasingly different from mine?
 - Is that right or wrong or....
- Religious leaders of Jesus’ day were trying to keep a God-honouring culture.

Luke 15:1-7 *Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!*

So Jesus told them this story: “If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others in the open country and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbours, saying, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!

- In this story, Jesus is addressing a mixed group of people.
- Tax collectors, notorious sinners, Pharisees, teachers.

1. The Price

- Our society is changing fast.
 - Preference / choices are escalating.
 - Divisiveness or tribalism is increasing.

Context of Ch 15:

- In Luke 14:25-35, Jesus lists the price for being a disciple:
 - Jesus before relationships (v26)
 - Sacrificial life (v27)
 - Count the cost: if you are going to build, ensure you have enough to go the distance (v28-29)
 - Don't fight a battle you don't think you can win (v31-32)

2. The Passion

- Luke 15 is a chapter of passion.
 - Passion and sacrifice go together.

ILLUSTRATION:

Daryl Cripe leads up Amplio group who partner with churches to move mission forward.

He challenges people with this question: "Who do you grieve for? Who is the one / or five that you ache for to find Christ – not as a project, but because you love them even if they don't believe."

He tells the story of an elder in a church he visited, who came up to him and said: "I am never going to grieve over an unbeliever because it hurts too much." They would prefer the church culture away from the storm.

[a] Passion for the lost motivates us.

Luke 15:4 *“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others in the open country and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it?”*

- Passion motivates.
- Key words
 - Go after! The lost do not know how to get back.
 - Until! Keep on searching.
- You only grieve for someone you love.
- NOTE that the 99 are still safe.
 - They are the flock that the one is returned to.

(b) The Lost need to be Carried:

Luke 15:5 *And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders.*

- The one that was lost required carrying.
 - Child on dad’s shoulders says: “Daddy, now I can see EVERYTHING!”

Galatians 6:2 *Share each other’s burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*

- Carry each other’s burdens.
- We are carried until we are strong enough to carry another.

(c) The Celebration

Luke 15:6-7 *When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbours, saying, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!*

- You can only grieve for a person while they are lost.

- Once found, there is a celebration.
- Ones who know the implication of one getting saved will rejoice together.
- This kind of passion changes the way we do church:
 - How friendly are we?
 - How supportive of each other?
 - How do we disciple one another?