

“More with Your Joy”
Luke 15:1-7

Introduction: Pg. ____

Two days ago a “68-year-old woman [from Medford!] was reportedly trying to back into a parking lot on Linwood Circle and drove over a curb” into Spy Pond in Arlington. Thankfully two good Samaritans see the car slowly going into the water, but there is no sight of the woman exiting the vehicle. One of the men jumps in the water to save her. There is actually a video that captures these moments where you can hear him shouting “Go out the back window.”

He finally reaches the car, literally as it begins its nose dive into the pond. He opens the back passenger door and screams: “You’ve gotta get out. You’ve gotta get out.” Shockingly, the car goes under the water with no sight of the woman and he shouts: “I lost her. I lost her.” Another woman screams: “Was there only one person in the car?” while debris from the vehicle begins to surface on the water.

After 15 seconds pass, suddenly the woman pops up and they scream “There she is.” By this time the first rescuer is physically exhausted, so his friend comes swimming out to retrieve the woman.

While they are coming to shore you can hear the woman saying: “I’m gonna die.” But the man screams: “No you’re not. You’re not dying.” And pulls her to shore.

It was an unbelievably riveting rescue right here in our midst. With that imagery in mind, I want us to turn our attention to the rescue mission of Jesus.

Read Luke 15:1-2

- The first two verses set the tone for the whole chapter. If we don’t understand verses 1 & 2, we won’t understand the famous parables that follow.
- Verse 1 tells us great news! Tax collectors (people who were despised by others because they would often swindle and steal from their debtors) & “sinners” drew near to Jesus (some translations put “sinners” in quotations, accurately representing the view of the “sinful” religious leaders.
- The only problem was that these religious leaders actually thought *this was a problem!* They grumbled, saying, “This man receives and shares meals with such despicable and ungodly people.”
- This provoked Jesus to tell a series of three of his most famous parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Let’s pick up in verse 3...

Read Luke 15:3-7

I want to suggest to you that there is no greater joy than someone discovering the life God intends for them through Jesus, AND

I want to suggest to you that there is no greater way to experience joy than by sharing the greatest joy of knowing Jesus.

The Point: Experience joy by sharing the greatest joy of knowing Jesus.

Would anyone like to have more joy in your life? More smiles, more laughter, more lift in your spirit, more elation, more celebration? Anyone...? Well, I'm glad you are here today.

In Luke 15, Jesus is saying: "You don't understand me. You don't get what I'm about. [You grumble at the fact that I hang with "sinners." That's exactly why I came.' You don't have my heart, which is why you don't experience my joy . . . But I want you to."

My working assumption here today is that in varying degrees we all find ourselves in the same boat. This parable is designed to pull us into the heart of Christ, and to make his greatest concern our greatest concern. Let me give you two ways we can see that happen.

I. Talk to others about Jesus to increase your joy (15:5-7)

- Do you see the implicit argument? When people find Jesus, they find joy. When someone aligns their life with the life God desires for them, they experience everything they could have ever wanted and more.
- Now, can we give people that? Yes and no. Unlike Jesus, we can't bring them joy by our presence, but we can bring them joy by bringing them to him.
- Not only does that bring them joy. It brings us joy.

- Let this be our motivation. Every person who knows Jesus has the responsibility, but not just the responsibility, the immense privilege and opportunity to tell other people about Jesus,
- BUT if we're being honest, far too much of the time, this feels more like something we have to do than some we get to do.
- It feels more like a duty than a delight.

- That's why this story is so powerful. It is saying, let your motivation be flipped from obligation to celebration. Joy is a much better motivator and it is all over this story.
 - Look at space. Verse 4. The search. Verse 5. He's rejoicing. Verse 6. He brings others into that. He does not rejoice privately. This is a community affair. Verse 7. And Jesus says, it's like that in heaven, more joy!
 - Then consider what scholars refer to as "the rule of end stress." Parables, like most stories, climax at the end.
 - Look at the end of this parable... v. 5-7
 - Look at the end of the next parable... v. 9-10
 - Look at the next parable, probably the most famous in the Bible, the prodigal son... v.32
 - Joy is the climax. It's the goal. It's what we should be chasing after. It's what we can expect when we are about what Jesus is about.
- Heaven (the angels of God) is overjoyed because God is overjoyed.

- When someone receives the life that Jesus died to bring them, heaven lights up!
- There is nothing better than this! The greatest earthly celebrations we can experience pale in comparison to this. It's better (big papi...)
- I believe telling the story of Jesus, talking to others about Jesus (what we refer to as "evangelism") is all about obtaining the heart of God. Period.
 - What breaks his heart, breaks our heart.
 - What thrills his heart, thrills our heart.
 - This is how we should pray. God, give us your heart.
- **1 Corinthians 9:23: "I do it all for the sake of the gospel that I may share with them in its blessing."** Expound.
- With these words Jesus both corrects and appeals to his detractors. They were grumbling when they should have been chest bumping. God is rejoicing over this. Why won't you join the celebration?

T:

II. Relentless pursue others to bring them home (15:1-4).

- I love *verse 4*. Jesus poses a question. *Read 4*
- Who wouldn't do this? And I think he is asking us the same question.
- This is so reasonable. If God really offers us rescue through Jesus, what better news is there to share with someone?
 - Our daughter Kesed, who just started kindergarten this year at the Brooks Elementary School, got her first Brooks Bee (for being cooperative... Be safe, kind, cooperative, peaceful).
 - I immediately congratulated her about it when she get home.
 - About an hour later, we were in the car together, and she said: "Daddy, how did you already know I got a Brooks B?" So I told her when good things happen, word travels fast." You know what I'm saying...
- Better than that, if God really offers us rescue through Jesus, what would we not do to "go after the one until we find him or her."?

I want to give you a few thoughts on what I think this can and should look like in our lives. The way we believe this happens best is through what we call "**Evangelistic Networking.**" Evangelistic networking says it is best to **allow friendships to form the basis for our conversations about Jesus.** We all have networks, right? Familial, geographic, vocational, and relational spheres of influence. So here are 5 principles of Evangelistic Networking.

Know the gospel drives mission.

- Consider two words here. Right em down. Devotion. & Desire.
- *Devotion* is the genesis of declaration. (Rw?) Is he worthy? The lack of worship is the reason missions exists.
 - The closer you get to Jesus the more you care about those far from him.

- The closer you get to Jesus, the more you will naturally, dare we say, reflexively talk about him.
- We talk about what we love the most.
- NORMAL CHRISTIANITY... not an optional extra... Books of Acts... Letters... Revelation...
- *Desire*
 - Desire this more than our own comfort or the approval of others.
 - We do not have to die for anyone. Jesus already did that. :) But we will have to die to our desire for comfort and approval.
 - I have a friend who is constantly telling other people about Jesus, so I asked him, "Mike, what's the secret?" You know what he said: "Get over yourself."
 - We have to be willing to cross the line of discomfort.
 - *There are a lot of maddening barriers to effective evangelism but the most maddening of them all is the Barrier of ME.
 - It's going to be awkward at times, no doubt, but Love moves past awkward.
 - People are sure to reject the message. We might take a hit (hopefully not physically). You really believe that. You're a fanatic. That's nuts. You're committing intellectual suicide.
 - Listen to the words of Ian Hutchison, Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering at MIT: "When I became a follower of Jesus, as an undergraduate at Cambridge University, quite a few of my friends said or implied that I was committing intellectual suicide. Here I am 35 years later. It doesn't feel like suicide."
- But as much as we expect some rejection, we better expect some reception as well.
- It is the gospel that drives our mission.
 - This means we are growing in our ability to articulate the gospel but also growing in understanding that the gospel motivates us to talk about Jesus.

Pray for 3-5 people in your relational networks.

- Recognizes God has strategically placed them in their networks to do ministry where life exists.
- Lead people to identify and own their personal spheres of influence (familial, geographic, vocational, relational)
- Lead people to identify personal proclamation Points (parks, regular events, coffee shops, interest groups, etc.)
- I don't see a reason why we shouldn't always be consistently praying for at least 3-5 people.
- What we probably need more than hearing a 37 minute sermon about telling people about Jesus (not in any way devaluing the Word) is spending 37 minutes in prayer asking God to give you his heart. (Because that would mean we're actually starting to put it into practice)

Invite people into their lives and the life of RHC

- How much time do you spend with people who do not know Christ?

- Sean Sears says: "It's easy to impress someone from a distance but you've got to be close to impact them." And then he goes on to say: "Xns who "self-identify" as mature are typically not as interested in hanging w lost ppl."
- Verse 1: These despised people were "all drawing near to hear him." The phrasing indicates this was a habitual experience.
- A whatever it takes attitude means that we will get this on our calendar. Intentionality. Take a vacation day. I'm serious. If you can't find the time, take a vacation day. Call in sick because there is something unhealthy going on in your soul. :) And I know this because it's the same with me.
- Invite them into your life and the life of Redemption Hill.
 - You don't have to do all the work. :) Utilize Pathways... Worship, Groups, Teams, Connecting Events, Serve Medford Efforts, ADVENT.
 - Most people will belong before they believe.
 - How Josh and Nancy and Jason and Angela and Jesse and Many others...

Tell your story and the story.

- Can articulate their testimony with confidence.
- How is the gospel changing you? That's your story.
 - When is the last time you've done that?
- The Story
 - **3 Circles - PIC**
- Know how to engage in 1 to 1 Bible Reading
- Use Evangelistic Resources (The Story, Two Ways to Live, Essential Jesus, Etc.), especially with those in their "incubator."
- Listen: In order to go after someone until we find them, we actually have to communicate the good news.
 - Well, I don't have the gift of evangelism. Well, I don't believe in the gift of evangelism.
 - In the mid-90s, a well-known leader who created a "spiritual gifts test," told me that about 10% of people have the gift of evangelism. Yet, that number seems to be on decline. Barna [recently released research](#) saying, "Among the interesting facets of the research was that just 1% of believers claim to have the gift of evangelism (down from 4% five years ago)."
 - Hmmmmm.
- **"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?" (Romans 10:14)**
- At some point, you gotta jump in the water.
- Here are a few tips:
 - Friends talk to friends about meaningful things.
 - Don't be afraid to nudge, and see how the HS works
 - Direct others through questions, not instruction

- Keep the conversation going... Persevere: We do not live in a culture where people are going to typically respond in the first conversation. Not the 4th, not the 9th but probably the 19th or 29th. For some 109th!
- Give yourself grace. You don't have to be awesome. God is awesome. You don't have to save anybody because you can't. "He turns on the lights." (Time)

▪
Display the gospel in community.

- **Do this TOGETHER: If we try to do this solo, it will be a no go.**
- **On your own, probably will not happen, or at least not as frequently and effectively as you would like.**
-

Conclusion:

With apologies to G. K. Chesterton, it's not that evangelism has been tried and found wanting, it's that evangelism has been found difficult and left untried.

2016 Vision: 35 new followers of Christ by the end of the year.

On a scale of 1-10...

...How deeply do you desire to see people come to faith in Christ?

...How willing are you to do something about it?

If not you, then who? If not now, then when?

Vision: End of your life... who you taking with you? I'm telling you. You don't want to get there without others with you because you pointed them to Jesus.

4 Options to Move Forward

1. Encouragement: Upside-Down Facebook Group...

2. Equipping Lunch: I'm going to buy everyone lunch who wants to grow in this area.

3. Prayer: I'm ready to do this. Pray for me.

4. I need Christ and I want to share Christ with others.

Text: 1, 2, 3, 4 to 781-866-6095

I'm praying that as I lead us in prayer, my phone is about to blow up!!