



The Joy Of Salvation - Part 6

Refusing to be Complacent About the Lost

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Luke 15:25-32

Three words for you here, “your alarm clock”. “Your alarm clock”. How do those three words make you feel? “Your alarm clock”. I don’t like that phrase at all. Alarm clock. What a terrible invention the alarm clock was. Necessary I get that but very unpleasant, the alarm clock. See the alarm clock every day in my life it prompts me to stop doing what I feel like doing and it prompts me to get going with what I’m supposed to be doing every single day faithfully. It’s going to have me stop doing what I feel like doing and it’s going to prompt me to get going with what I’m supposed to be doing. I may not like that every morning but I need that if I’m going to be a productive father, husband, I’m going to be gainfully employed then I can’t just do what I feel like doing early in the morning. I have to start getting going at doing the things that I’m supposed to be doing. That’s what all responsible people live of course when it comes to their work, their health, their family responsibilities but it’s unfortunate that far too many Christians don’t think that way when it comes to their Christian life. Right? (01:51)

I mean it’s easy for us I suppose to read our Bibles that may have us stop doing something that is comfortable for us and prompts us to do what we’re supposed to be doing. And we read those things and we think, well, I don’t feel like it so we don’t do it. I mean that happens all the time there may be a very comfortable place in our Christian life, I’m warm and cozy right here and now I’ve just got a sermon in my ears or a passage in my eyes and I just like to stay here I don’t want to move to that next level of spiritual growth. Even if you go to a church where the sermons feel like an alarm clock you know what I mean? The buzzing alarm clock, it’s easy just to reach out and hit the snooze button. I’ll do that later perhaps, roll over, hug your pillow, rub your toes together under those covers and say, “I’m not good with that right now.” (02:50)

Well Jesus was quite a preacher and if anyone can be credited with preaching sermons that sounded like alarm clocks it certainly was Christ because he was constantly telling people, listen you can’t do what you feel like doing if what you feel like doing isn’t what you’re supposed to be doing, so you better get at what you’re supposed to be doing. And if there’s ever a set of messages that he was giving that gave that appeal it was certainly here in Luke chapter 15. And I’ll tell you Luke chapter 15 is a lot like the current alarm clock I have which starts very softly and pleasantly and then it gets a little louder and louder and then it becomes so excruciatingly annoying this dissonant horrible screeching sound that comes out of my alarm clock that you just have to reach over and smash it. (03:40)

That certainly is what’s going on in Luke chapter 15. Because you know if you’ve been with us, we’ve got a couple parables and they were just fine and good, they were nice, easy to listen to. You’ve got a guy who’s got sheep, one of them is lost, he goes out and gets them, he finds it, brings it back, calls his friends together celebrates, that’s great, that’s great. We can nod, we can say, “Amen, that’s good.” Woman lost a coin, she sweeps the floor, she lights a lamp, she searches for it, she finds it, great, fantastic. The lost has been found, let’s celebrate. And then we have this third parable that we took a few weeks now to study. The lost son which was much more involved. The longest parable of Christ in the gospels. All this detail about the problem of being separated from the father and then this son comes to his senses and he experiences real repentance and then he’s reconciled to the father. That’s where we left off last time in verse 24, the lost was found and they all began to celebrate. (04:34)

Now you’ve got a nice triad of parables right there and they got louder and louder and longer and more concentrated as we went from one lost in a hundred sheep, one lost in ten coins and one lost in two sons. And now we have this great call of the father to celebrate, we’ve got to celebrate and you’d think this would be over at this point. That’s been the title of our series, the joy of salvation, people ought to get excited when people are saved and they repent and that’s great and you can see some of the Pharisees and the scribes in verse number 2 it says these parables were directed toward nodding their heads but they’re starting to get to that place where this alarm clock is buzzing and they get the fact that this is unsettling, it’s unnerving. You’re directing these toward us because that’s not where it ends. We’re going to close this out, verses 25 through 32 as he starts to make super clear. Listen this isn’t about just the joy of salvation. It’s about the fact that you don’t have the joy of salvation when it comes to other people’s salvation. It’s time for you to stop doing what you feel like doing which is celebrating your own relationship with God and start concerning yourselves with the lost sheep, lost coin and the lost son and start to make a fuss over those

that aren't yet saved. Which is what you're so mad and resentful about me and my ministry, Jesus would say because I'm out here sharing the gospel with tax collectors and sinners who are giving me a hearing and you resent it. (06:00)

It might be good to start just before we read the end of chapter 15 to start at the beginning of chapter 15 just to remember where this started and who this was directed to. It says the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. We ended chapter 14 with the fact that some people don't want to hear him but here were some people that did want to hear him, they were giving him a hearing. Verse 2, and the Pharisees and the scribes, they grumbled, they muttered, they protested, they were irritated, they were annoyed, they were irked, they were aggravated, saying this man receives sinners and eats with them. That's why we had these three parables, the lost, the found, celebrate, the lost, the found, celebrate, the lost, the found, celebrate, three times and all the more with detail and emphasis and concentration and then you have the addendum which really isn't an addendum, it's the point. Verses 25 through 32. So, after all these weeks studying chapter 15 let's get to the point. The point is you might be just too comfortable with your own relationship with God and you want to stay in that nice comfortable place of cultivating your relationship with God and you really haven't given the passion or the fuss that we should give toward the people that aren't here with us this morning that need to be saved. We need to celebrate their conversion as he now turns the attention to the older son. (07:18)

Verse 25, you know the parable, celebration in the next room, verse 24, but the older son he was out in the field. Look at it with me, as he came near and he drew near to the house he heard music and dancing, there's the celebration we've looked at in all three of these parables. Let's rejoice the lost was found and he called one of the servants and he asked him, "What these things meant, what's going on here." Verse 27, and he said to him, the servant to the older brother, your brother, the younger brother has come and your father has killed the fattened calf because he's received him back safe and sound and you can even anticipate in his voice this great optimism and excitement. Isn't that great? No, it wasn't great, verse 28. He was irked, he was bothered, he resented this, he was angry. Now note this, he refused to celebrate the salvation of his brother. And his father came out - here's a strong word - and he entreated him, please, please. It doesn't tell us right at that particular point what he said, we'll see a little bit in verse 31 and 32, but he begs him that he respond to that entreaty. And he says this in verse 29 he answers his father. He says, "Look, these many years I've served you, listen to the anger in his voice, you know he's angry verse 28. I've never disobeyed your command, you never gave me a young goat - which by the way is a lot less than a fattened calf. He's making a statement here, I don't even get a small party. That I might celebrate with my friends, but when this son of yours - isn't that interesting how that happens when your kids disobey and your wife says, what has your son done now. Have you noticed that? I'm not saying that happens in my house, very often. - This son of yours, he says, not my brother, this son of yours has devoured your property with prostitutes and look what you've done, you celebrate, you've killed the fattened calf for him. Well yeah, you don't get it, you're not seeing the fact that he has repented, you're not understanding the fact that he's turned around. You don't see the fact that the grace that's happened in his life that now that he's with us you don't celebrate that your dead brother was found. You don't get it. And he said verse 31, to his son, "Son, you are always with me, all that is mine is yours. It is fitting though", remember that word? (09:33)

We had a little word study on that when we needed to encounter this earlier. Deo, this Greek root that comes with this word is derived from means to bind or to latch or to attached together. So, the circumstances and the response these are tied together. And that's why some translations give us a little stronger English word, not just fitting, but it's necessary, we ought, we have to celebrate and be glad. Why? Because this is such a big deal, you don't understand. Your brother was dead, he was as good as dead in this famine, he's out there and we thought he was lost but now he's alive. He was lost, we didn't even know where he was but now he's found. Now if that seems like an abrupt ending to this parable, it is. Because don't you, like me, want to know what the brother's response was to that speech? I do but he doesn't give it to us. And that's the masterful telling of this parable where Jesus wants to lay this right in our laps for 2000 years now and every generation that's had this passage in their eyeballs to think what about me. How would I respond? How do I respond? Because if there's one message you want to gather from Luke chapter 15, here it is, a group of people that are resentful of Jesus' evangelistic passion and you've got to stand back and say, "Listen, all of this ink spilled in chapter 15 on the importance of seeing lost people found and celebrating lost people found being celebrated, lost people found being celebrated and wonder do I ever resent that kind of evangelistic passion? Do I share in the joy of other people's salvation? Am I as much willing to engage in the fuss that the father or the shepherd or the woman who lights the lamp and sweeps, do I share in that or do I resent that?" And of course, the whole point of this is don't, don't you dare. Heaven is rejoicing, God is rejoicing, the angels are



rejoicing, you should rejoice. It's fitting, it's necessary, it ought to happen, we ought to celebrate when lost people are saved. Number one on your outline if you're taking notes let's just get that overarching principal of this passage and let's write it down. Never resent evangelistic passion. (11:34)

1. Never Resent Evangelistic Passion

Never resent that, they were resenting it in Christ. And that's why Jesus told these stories. You shouldn't resent it, salvation is too big of a deal, lost souls being saved is too big of an important significant thing, you cannot resent the fact that I'm out there talking with people that will listen to me about repentance. Never resent evangelistic passion. (11:55)

The older son resented the father's fuss over his wayward son. The Pharisees resented Jesus' fuss over the tax collectors and sinners. By the way I wonder if you ever resent Christians for their fuss over reaching non-Christians. Uh, no. Don't you? I find a lot of people with our theological stripe in their life, they do. Matters of fact they're very suspicious of any Christian who is really passionate about reaching lost people. And when you put them together in a church and the church is interested in that, all of sudden now, oh there's got to be some compromise there. That church is all about numbers. Have you ever heard that one? All about numbers. They're just trying to build their little kingdom over there, they just want to be a mega-church, that place. That guy is always engaging people with what they believe, can't he just let people alone, just let them believe what they want. I don't like the fact that they're always gets to that place that tense spiritual conversation with people. You know that church and that pastor they're just trying to build his kingdom over there, that's all. (12:56)

Now we say that sometimes because perhaps if you're really biblically minded you think of 2 Corinthians chapter 4 where you see Paul saying there are people that are practicing cunning and they're tampering with the word of God. Now listen you can disagree with some people's evangelistic methods. Some of them are bad, some of them are not wise, some of them compromise the word and you should rightly say that is bad. But you better separate that from the fact that they might be engaged in something that should be an offense to your own relationship with God when you look in the mirror. It ought to cause you some guilt and that is they're engaging in evangelistic passion and perhaps you're not. I find too many people hiding behind their theological fortress saying, well you know what if God wants them saved, God will get them saved. I don't really need to be into all that. I wonder if in your mind you ever entertain those thoughts that there are some churches and some people just too into outreach. (13:58)

Now I don't want to sound defensive although I've been the victim of this in circles that I run in that our church has bumper stickers and invites and outreach programs. What are they trying to do over at that place? Must be compromising the word or at least if they can't find the compromise of the word there must be some bad motives here. By the way you might want to jot this down, Philippians chapter 1 verse 15 and following. Before you go around thinking that's a godly perspective you better read what the apostle Paul says about that. If you can't find that they're tampering with the word of God but they are passionately evangelistic then you better just shut up about it. Matter fact you might just want to praise it because the Apostle Paul says even if they have good motives or bad motives I'm sure excited about this because I have evangelistic passion that Christ is preached, I rejoice in that. Do you rejoice in that or do you get in with your friends saying, well that church, those people, that guy, that group, they're always trying to argue with you? Listen not all the methods in evangelism are good, I get that, I understand it, but you've got to get to the place where you know your evangelistic passion is just as high as those over there that you're willing to criticize because you don't like the way they're going about their evangelism. Easy for you to pass someone passing out tracts or having some kind of event going on or seeing some outreach thing and to kind of raise your eyebrow, I wonder what that's all about, I wonder if their motives are pure, I wonder if the word is being accurately and uncompromisingly taught? And you need to stop and say, how evangelistically passionate am I? Because you know because the Pharisees and scribes they didn't care much about the lost tax collectors and sinners. (15:30)

This is an indictment on the heart of people that thought they had it good with God but look at people who wanted to expand the kingdom and looked down upon them as having some problem, having some compromise, having some bad motive. Now I've quoted this throughout but let's get the context before I quote it one more time. Luke chapter 19. I often quote verse 10. I quote verse 10 because when we look at a set of parables about the lost being sought we can't help but read this verse and remember that Jesus in his own autobiographical statement said, "The son of man has come to seek and save the lost." Now if you resent people with evangelistic passion you better resent Christ

because that's what he was all about in his declaration and his practice and he was resented by people for that. But I don't think you should, I think as a matter of fact you ought to look at your own heart and say, how evangelistically passionate am I? But let me just give you the context here starting in verse 1. Have you gotten there? Luke 19, he entered Jericho, Jesus did and he was passing through and behold there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and he was rich, that combination would just raise the corner of someone's lip in the first century. And kind of [thupth – sound effect], [muhh – sound effect], it's far worse than saying that guy works for the IRS. It's like back in the day, remember that controversy, was it an IRS guys that they caught there in those Las Vegas hotels and the high rise with their champagne. They're doing it all on our tax payer money. A lot of corruption in the IRS in the last seven, eight years and you look at that stuff and you see that and you recognized, ugh I don't like that. They take my hard-earned money, that's how it feels, and then they abuse it. And you think to yourself, that's bad. Well in those days without the accountability of the modern world they were going out there all the time skimming off the top and it was they made minimum wage if you will then they added the perks that they could add by, you know, enforcing this kind of false margin in their tax collecting, so they were doing it not for the temple, they were doing it for Rome and so people didn't like them. And you know that, they were the low strata of Jewish culture, but then to add this phrase, and he was rich, I mean you know he was getting rich off of the kind of extortion that was going on with the ancient IRS of Rome and he was a Jew. Nothing could be worse than that, and yet – here's a word, he was - here's a good word going – seeking what? They wanted to see who this Jesus was. He wanted some information about him. Who is he? What's this about? Big fuss about Christ, I want to know what that's about. But on account of the crowd he could not because he was small in stature. Remember that old song? Zacchaeus a wee little man, a wee little man was he? Alright here he is, a little man so he ran with his little legs, verse 4, and he climbed up into a sycamore tree to see for he was about to pass way. Here comes Jesus' entourage and he's up in a tree leaning off a branch to see. And Jesus came to that place, imagine this drama, and he looked up at this man hanging off a branch. Zacchaeus hurry get your little body down here. Come down. I'm going to stay at your house today. So, he hurried and he came down and look at here's the phrase, this is what Jesus is looking for open doors, receptive hearts, and he received him joyfully. I want to know about this Christ, Christ is inviting himself over to my house. Absolutely come on over, I'd like to learn. (19:02)

Verse 7, the whole point of Luke 15, and when they saw it, we don't even get to definition of who they are, right? The people saw it, they all grumbled. And here it is again, he's gone in to be a guest of a man who's a sinner. There he is, there he is. I mean, what's he doing with that? Zacchaeus stood and we don't know what went on between verse 6 and verse 8 in terms of the conversation but clearly Jesus is all about preaching the message of repentance which he made clear in Luke 15 that's what it's all about when he's got an open ear. Calling people to see their sin, repent of their sin, to be reconciled to the Father and so Zacchaeus got there. And he's about to bear some fruit in keeping with repentance, verse 8. And Zacchaeus stood and he said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I've defrauded anyone, which of course if you got rich off of being a tax collector in the first century you clearly did, of anything I will restore it fourfold. I'm going to make restitution here fourfold for all that I've done wrong. And Jesus said to him there's the fruit of salvation, there's the fruit of repentance. Today salvation has come into this house since he also is a son of Abraham. You've got faith, faith that works I see it. And you know what that makes God do, do you know what that makes Jesus? It makes them happy, it makes them want to celebrate. And then he makes the statement, that's the point. I live on this. The Son of Man is come to seek and save the lost. (20:28)

I can't help but think of that scene when there's another setting where Jesus is talking and evangelizing someone they don't think he should be and this time it wasn't the crowds, it wasn't the Pharisees, it wasn't the scribes, it was the inner circle of the twelve. They're making a trip through Samaria and John chapter 4 he stops for water, he's so famished he sends the guys into town to get lunch. He's sitting there wanting a drink of water asks this gal, open door an opportunity, apparently receptive heart that he perceives at least he's going to try to knock on that door and of course he does, he's Christ, he's got perceptions we don't. Nevertheless, he's there knocking and this woman who is a Samaritan and a loose, you know, living kind of immoral woman at that. You could probably tell that in the ancient world by the way she carried herself, by the way she dressed, by the way she adorned herself, and there she was and he was sharing with her and the guys come back, and no one wanted to ask why you're talking to this Samaritan woman. Not only that, you've got a gal who doesn't look like the best of Samaria, doesn't look like the best of Sychar and she's a woman and she's a Samaritan and what are you doing? But this isn't the Pharisees and scribes they're not going to grumble but they sure are going to question this. And Jesus responds to those guys when they said, "Well, we don't know what to do. Well here's the 12-pack of tacos we got at the drive thru in Sychar, let's just go ahead and eat." When they bring up food Jesus says, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to

accomplish his work.” What is his work? Well we read it right here, verse 10, to seek and save the lost, he has an opportunity, he’s passionate. They’re like ‘whoa, I don’t know if he should be doing that.’ Just like you’ve said I don’t know if that guy should be sharing that, I don’t know if my husband should be talking to that guy about Christ right now, I don’t know why we have to bring this up with the waiter right now, all that church I don’t know why are they doing another outreach, what are they trying to do, what kind of kingdom are they trying to build? He says, I thrive on this it is my food to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. And he says, your problem is you don’t see it. He says, “Don’t you say yet there’s four months and then the harvest” - I’m quoting verse 35 from John 4 – “look I tell you lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest.” Why don’t you see the world the way that I do? Well, you don’t have a passion for evangelism. The whole point of Luke 14 is that the joy of salvation is easy to celebrate when we’re seeing ourselves as the sheep, the coin and the son. And it’s even something in terms of an encouragement I suppose when we think about being the shepherd who’s seeking and we partner with God and the woman who’s lighting the lamps and we partner with the Spirit and the Father who’s seeking the lost son and we think that’s neat too, I get that. But then to turn this parable around and say well wait a minute, let me slip my toes into the sandals of the scribes and the Pharisees and wonder if I stand aloof and criticize and question motives and don’t quite feel that same enthusiasm when people make a fuss over lost people. That’s where we are in this passage and all I’ve got to tell you is to resent evangelistic passion is to resent the heart of Christ then you don’t have it. And there’s the alarm clock of this sermon, to just wake us up to say, I don’t like the feeling of being that out there, I don’t like the feelings of going and talking, it’s time for us to stop doing what we feel like doing and start doing what we’re supposed to be doing if you claim to be a Christian and you want to emulate the Spirit of Christ and you want to share the heart of God you’ve got to look up at the harvest and see they’re white. You live and rub shoulders with non-Christians all week long. (24:05)

Back to our passage, Luke chapter 15. The brother is angry, refused, he didn’t have it, he didn’t see it. Father intreats him middle of verse 28 and he says, “Listen, you’ve got to come in and celebrate.” I’m putting words in his mouth but clearly that’s what’s going on here. And the response, here comes the response, let’s analyze the response of the brother. He says to the father, “Look these many years I’ve served you.” Which by the way is the word for slavery here. There’s a little dig at dad. I’ve been slaving away for you for all these years. Starting with the word, “look”. Which is kind of a jolting beginning of the sentence in Greek. “Hey, look, I’m slaving for you, I’ve served you, I’ve never disobeyed your command.” By the way whenever we see someone saying that in scripture is that ever an accurate statement? No, rich young ruler said to Jesus, I’ve kept these from my youth. And he says, great you’ve kept the commandments. Let’s go to the first, you should have no other gods before me, how about your money? Why don’t you give up your money and show me that God is number one in your life? Couldn’t even do that. Matter of fact if you want to look at plain didactic terms look at Romans chapter 3. How many are righteous? No not one. How many have sinned? How about I John the one who says he has no sin is a liar and the truth is not in him. This passage should ring a bell saying there’s nobody who can say, “I’ve never disobeyed your command.” Not to mention let’s just go to the scenario. A child saying to a parent, I mean I’d laugh if any of my three kids said, “Oh, I’ve never disobeyed your command.” Right? That would be great, grab a popcorn, what are you talking about? You can think that you’re better than your brother but clearly, you’ve disobeyed me. Couldn’t even see his need for repentance here. (25:46)

Yet you never gave me a young goat, I mean I don’t get anything for me, that I might celebrate with my friends. Let’s try and analyze this really quickly. Here he is in essence saying, I don’t like all this fuss dad about the salvation of my brother or should I say your son. I don’t see my need for repentance because I’m always doing the right thing and all my service to you it’s a drudgery because I’m slaving away for you. And I see all my service as something you ought to be giving me parties for this. I want you to recognize my work, I want a celebration. Oh, and by the way isn’t it kind of ironic he wants to celebrate not with his family, sounds a lot like the younger brother, I want to celebrate and have a party with my friends. Even that, showing the distance between him and the father and the family. (26:40)

Now I reworded all those as I just kind of took notes on the passages I was studying it and in essence I don’t want, I’m fighting this fuss that the father is making about the brother. I put it this way, I want to do what I want, not what you want. Nothing wrong with me, I never sinned. I don’t like serving you, it’s drudgery, it’s slavery. People should be making a fuss about me, where’s my party. When do I get a party for me and my friends. Do you see what I’m trying to do here? (27:08)

Me, my, I, I, me, my, it’s all about him. I can’t celebrate the joy of someone else’s salvation because I’ve got enough

issues right here and I don't think I got all that I want. And my thing is more important than his thing and I can't get outside of myself to celebrate that. Now, putting our toes into the sandals of the Pharisees and the scribes is something I think you might be reluctant to do because if you know your theology these are hypocrites, they're not righteous, they think that they're right before God by of their works, they're not relationship with God even though the father is about to respond to them hypothetically as though the older brother is. We know he's in need of repentance so you find it hard if you're here with a testimony, you're converted, you find it hard to put yourself in the sandals of the Pharisees and the scribes and say, "Well, yeah, that's me." But you know what? You don't have to be a Pharisee and a scribe to fall to the same sins as the Pharisees and the scribes, right? We can share the same mindset. And I venture to say the reason you don't have an evangelistic passion the way that Christ does, if in fact you don't, is because some of the same problems that the Pharisees and the scribes had are sins that you share in. Maybe not to the same extent. They could not get over themselves to have a love for the lost. And so, let me just word it that way because in some sense that may apply to you as well. Number 2 let's put it down that way. You need to get over yourself to love the lost. (28:36)

2. Get Over Yourself to Love the Lost

Right? Something is wrong in your life, about your self focus that keeps you from being as passionately evangelistic as the Lord Jesus Christ. Something in your life that you want to protect, defend, focus on. Let's just start with that without making an intentional play on words. Myopia, myopia, you hear that when you're at the optometrist, right? He's myopic, he sees things up close, he can't see things far away. When Jesus said in John 4, look guys you're trying to get to where we're going. You're going from Galilee to Judea, Judea to Galilee, we're passing through Samaria. You just have a focus on where we're headed. It's like we're going to a preaching event, now here's a chance to preach to someone and you don't even see that because you've just got your interest and they're right there in front of you. But really you need to lift up your eyes and look to the fields because even everywhere that we're going there are people that are lost. There's this myopic view of things, it's let me put it this way, you might be really converted and you're not a scribe and a Pharisee but it's easy for you to start adopting the language of foolishness when it comes to your relationship with God where it becomes so inwardly focused. (29:49)

Think of the ridiculous phrase "my personal relationship with God". What in the world does that mean, right? As what was once said back in the day you never talk about your personal belly button. Of course, it's your personal, it's your belly button, right? Why would I have to say my personal relationship. When you talk about your relationship with God, of course it's your personal relationship with God, what are you trying to emphasize in this ensconcing word, my personal relationship with God. See this is the public relationship you should have, is your relationship with God. It should be the most transparent thing you have and yet modern Christianity has adopted this phrase that seems so common to us, you wouldn't flinch if I used it in a sermon, your personal relationship with God. Well of course it's your personal relationship, it's your relationship with God. But it's never to be a personal relationship with God. What is that about? Well, I like to keep my beliefs to myself. Well you don't share the evangelistic heart of God and I bet you resent people that don't keep their faith to themselves. You've got a problem, you need Luke 15, you need the rebuke, you need the alarm clock. You need it to move from a gentle beep, beep, beep to some kind of siren in your life to recognize there's a problem if your relationship with God is all about how you can be served by God or I love celebrating my salvation. I love seeing those, no, that's good, that's fine. but God says, "Where's your concern for lost people?" (31:17)

See you come to church and perhaps not as much as you should, you see the people that are here. Now I'm not trying to set myself up as anybody that has mastered this point of view but I tell you, one thing that I grieve about and pray for often is the people that aren't here. I see the empty seats almost as strongly as I see the seats that are filled. I recognize that the problem is that living amongst a million people in South Orange County that there are people right now walking their dog sitting at Starbucks, playing golf on the golf course, reading the Wall Street Journal that need to have their lives right here in this room listening to the word of God and worshipping with us. And you've got to lift up your eyes to the harvest and recognize if you don't see that maybe you've got this myopic theology that all you think about when it comes to God, redemption, salvation, death of Christ on the cross is mine and me and I. And I got mine and I just want my relationship better with God. Maybe the problem with your frustration and your spiritual growth and not having all those warm tingly feelings that you want as you try to inwardly turn your focus in your relationship with God is that you're not looking at the harvest because you want to be close with Christ. You can't be close with Christ unless you share the passion and heart that Christ has. And what is his heart and passion? I came to seek and save the lost. (32:34)



You're out getting tacos for us to have lunch and that's fine, I sent you to get lunch but when I come back and you're raising your eyebrow, why is he talking to that non-Christian right now. You don't get it. You don't know my food. You know what fuels me is seeing lost people saved. You got to get over yourself. And by the way we can make a laundry list I suppose but we don't have time for that but let me at least say this. One of the reasons you don't have a passion for evangelism if in fact you don't is because you're concerned what it might do to you if you start speaking up about Christ, am I right? What about my reputation, right? What will they think of me, particularly in this climate that gets increasingly dark and people are more hostile and people are angry at us as Christians and soon as I open my mouth in the lunchroom about Christ they're going to think oh you're one of those homosexual hating Bible thumpers, that's you. You're afraid of what they'll think of you. You're fearful about your reputation being tarnished. Can you stop worrying about your reputation and start worrying about God's reputation? Can you recognize what you need to fear is not the loss of your reputation, you need to put it in the words of 2 Corinthians 5, you need fear God. Period. Knowing the fear of God, the Apostle Paul says, we persuade men. Who have you persuaded this week about Christ? Who have you sought to engage in a persuasive conversation? And you think, I just don't like that, I understand that you don't like that. And the Pharisees and the scribes didn't like that, that's what the 15th chapter is all about and we've done a lot of weeks in this to finally get to the punch line. We cannot resent evangelistic passion and if you do resent it there's something about you that's getting in the way and you just got to get over yourself. Let your reputation go. (34:15)

You do understand one day the smoke is going to clear. Christ is going to be seated on the throne and all that's going to matter is people having right relationships with the one who descends from heaven in the clouds, that's all that will matter. And for you walking around silently in your circle of friends, you never bringing up the issue of your Christianity because it's a personal relationship with God, will seem absolutely foolish when everything you studied in your small group and in your Bible studies and at church comes to visual fruition and you stand there and recognize, wow this was all real after all. Was I willing to put myself out there and speak up about the gospel? Well, they'll think I'm foolish. Man did the Bible not predict this? In 1 Corinthians chapter 1 he says, I understand the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing and it will be. And yet to those who are being saved, it's the power of God. Now you're willing to not deliver the power of God to save people because you're afraid people will think you're a fool. Paul reiterates the refrain of this in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 when he says this, if we're beside ourselves, in other words if you think we're crazy, if the people see us speaking up for Christ think we're nuts then we're doing it for God's sake, at least God is pleased. But if we're in our right minds and if what we say becomes the power of God, it's the most reasonable thing I've ever heard, I've got sin, I've got guilt, I've got a problem, Christ resolves that problem, I can be right and reconciled with God. That man, is complete wisdom from heaven if they get then he says, it's for your sake, you benefit from it. Either way we're benefiting God and his pleasure that we're doing what he's asked us to do, to be his ambassadors in our generation or the person we're sharing with. (36:01)

Man, talk about being pleased, how about the person that brought you to Christ? Are you happy they spoke up about Christ? And I think we've got too many second, third, fourth generation Christians in our church who don't recognize what it's like to be 35, 40 years old and have someone come up and speak about Christ, have a series of conversations over a few months and finally get to the place of conviction and repentance and go that's what it's all about, we need more people like that to share the gospel in our society. Don't fear your reputation if you think it's scary in our day we talked about our 500-year anniversary of Martin Luther, put yourself in his shoes when he sat there before a crowd of people including the Emperor Charles V, who could easily take his life and condemn him to death and he knew that. And I know many of you know, you are history buffs, you know the final line of his speech, let me give you a little bit of the paragraph in which that final line was found as he stood before all the magistrates of that kingdom. He said to Charles V, "Your imperial majesty and your lordships, you demand a simple answer well then here it is plain and unvarnished. Unless I'm convinced of error by the testimony of scripture or by clear reasoning I stand convinced by the scripture to which I have appealed and my conscience is taken captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything. Now listen to this, for to act against conscience that is convicted by the truth of scripture is neither right nor safe. And we're afraid of our own safety. Here I stand I can do no other so help me God. (37:40)

You're afraid what someone is going to think about you because of your backwards Bible sexual ethics. You're afraid that someone is going to look at you and not want to team up with you on that project at work or whatever it might be. I mean here were people risking their lives not to mention there were so many others who gave their lives



because they were not willing to compromise their commitment and their vocal promotion of the truth of the gospel. And Martin Luther is a good example for us. Get over yourself to love the lost. The scribes and Pharisees couldn't do that. (38:15)

The father's response two verses and we're done with chapter 15. Verses 31 and 32, the father says to the older brother. He said to him, "Son, you're always with me." Now that's a presumptuous statement because Jesus is talking about the scribes and the Pharisees and they were about to kill him by the way, so they weren't with him but they presume to be, as they sat there they thought they were saved, they thought they were in with God. And if you're in with God you'd know what a cause for rejoicing that is and you don't rejoice, you certainly don't rejoice when other people are in with God, so that's an indictment. All that I have, all that is mine is yours. Well you are a participant and recipient of the kingdom which of course we would say theologically well they weren't but they presumed to be. And if you are you'd know what a joy that is and the cause for rejoicing you should have that you are a participant and recipient of the inheritance of the kingdom and all that I have is yours. That you'd think would be a cause for rejoicing when someone else gets that. It was fitting to celebrate because here's someone that you would agree did not have that, was not with me, did not receive the kingdom. Don't you think when someone gets into that position, you claim to be in, you should rejoice, celebrate and be glad? You know what a big deal this is for your brother was not just not getting, you know, the pay raise he deserved. Not having a cool thing happen in his life, he was dead and now he's alive. He was lost. Do you understand the implications of that, in this famine? And now he's been found. What do you think happens to your coworker when he becomes a Christian? I mean is it a small thing, is this a let's rejoice because we can engage with God in a self-help program? No. Is this maybe some kind of you know life advancement, some inner peace thing that people talk about I want to be spiritually kind of, it's not about all that. Some of that may come as a result of Christianity. It is about the fact that they are headed for an eternity paying for the penalty of every sin they've ever committed. And you have the opportunity where your conversation to exchange their destiny as God works in that conversation to see heaven secured and hell cancelled. That is gigantic. This is not a life improvement this is life saving work. The whole point of this, though we don't see how the older responded and we don't see how the scribes and Pharisees were going to respond. Well, most of them ended up crucifying him but we want to see how you and I respond that should be that we engage with Christ in making all the fuss about non-Christians. Number 3, let's put it this way, we need to engage in God's life-saving work. (40:49)

3. Engage in God's Life-Saving Work

Life-saving work. Of course, you've heard these sermons from this platform before. But listen this time of year we can tag team in such simple ways. Do you know that most people, even in the Sodom and Gomorrah of Southern California will not have their jaw hit the floor when you invite them to your church in December for Christmas stuff? They're not going to freak out. And I know the polls include you know, Kentucky and Illinois and Georgia and the Bible belt. But you do understand that most people respond in polling that if you ask them to church they would not be offended by that. They respond favorably to it. Right they think that you like them enough to invite them to your church, particularly for two things in the calendar, Easter and Christmas. People are favorable toward being invited to church. And you and I can team in a very simple way in December just by you with me saying listen, I'll bring them, I'll hold them, you give them the gospel and we can do that in some. I mean think of next week, next week there's singing and dancing of little children in costumes, you want to talk about a low bar, if you said there's a kid's pageant at my church for Christmas do you want to go? Non-Christians are going to go, "Aaah, I can't believe you asked me that, you're a Jesus freak." Even if you're afraid of your reputation here's a baby step for you. Here's a baby step, just invite them to the Christmas musical next week, just invite them. And then after that, the following weekend we'll preach the Bible. I'm going to do that evangelistically on one aspect of the Christmas story which I think is interesting, even non-Christians wonder about this, the Virgin Birth, I'm going to talk about the Virgin Birth. What is that all about? That's bizarre, what's that? Well, we'll answer some intellectual questions and we'll drive it to the gospel. You bring them in, hold them up, I'll hit them with the gospel. We will team together, okay? You bring them here, and we'll do it together. And then Christmas Eve, you want to feel good movie moment, invite them on Christmas Eve, 12:30, 2 o'clock, 3:30, 5 o'clock and then Christmas day. We're so zealous we're going to do church on Christmas day. Your non-Christian friends have no idea, do you normally do that, do you not do that, what's that all about? Yes, invite them. Especially if you know people who don't have big plans for that morning, invite them on Christmas morning. There's four different programs that you have an opportunity, very low bar, to actually be a part of God's work in exposing your non-Christian friends to the gospel of Christ. (43:30)



Now I'm going to help you with that this morning, I'm going to have the ushers come down the aisles, I want you to take three of these, couples take five of these little tiny plastic bags, with a little card inside. What's this all about? Very simple the bag, you got to Costco, Walmart, Target, you buy your candies, or you make some cookies, you can probably get a stack of 4 or 5 cookies in there. You take this card which we've designed for you with all the programming I just talked about and slip it in there, it'll get a little of that chocolate from the chocolate chip on it, that's alright, just stick it right in there, it may sweat a little bit because your cookies are freshly baked, right, I don't need all that, if I'm your neighbor I just want M&Ms in there, that's all I need. If you're really fru-fru, put a little bow, a little ribbon on it. And then here I'm going to train you how to do this. Go to your neighbor and say, come to my church at Christmas. You don't need degrees or massive training on this, you extend your elbow and you hold this out. Now you hand most people cookies or M&Ms they're going to take it from you. Say these words, come to my church this December for Christmas. Well, I'm busy next weekend. Great, there are four different opportunities to come to our church. This week we have the little children singing and dancing in costume on the stage. Christmas Eve, that's a good time, have you ever been to a Christmas Eve, very low bar, simple. We're going to do this thing I'm going to call it sounds weirder than it is, singing with my mind. We're going to look at Christmas Carols on Christmas Eve. Non-Christians words they've heard and sung throughout their life. We're going to talk about them, what do they mean? Come to my church at Christmas. Bam, simple. I want everyone to take three of these at least. You have no friends at all, take two, and pray that you'll make two friends. And go introduce yourself to someone and give them this. And say come to church with me at Christmas. (45:31)

Now again I'll bet there's some visitors here with a group this size who have gone back to point number 1 of this sermon. He's one of these churches he's trying to be a mega-church. The guys probably collecting a following for his ego. Listen it has nothing to do with it and even if it did, Philippians 1:15 says you shouldn't care what my motives are. But I can tell you my motives are pure in this. As pure as one can clarify them. I want to go home. Do you understand that? I want to get off this planet and leave it. All I want to do is fill up the bus so we can go home. The Bible says he's waiting for the return of Christ and the coming and establishment of the kingdom until enough people come to repentance. He's not wishing that any should perish but all that should come to repentance. He's got a list, all those appointed to eternal life are going to believe and at some point, we're going to fill up this ship. Trust me, I have no interest in staying on the planet any longer than I have to. I am ready to go. That sounds bizarre to you, study your Bible more. The world is crucified to me and I to it. I'm ready to leave, I'm not going to kill myself, don't worry, don't call your therapist, you need to give a pill to Pastor Mike. I'll stick around, I'm not killing myself but I'm ready to leave. I don't want to build a kingdom down here, I just want to go home, see? So, let's build the kingdom, I know we send missionaries all around the world. You are a missionary here, look around, look at these empty seat, who belongs in these seats right here? Lost people and they need to get saved. (46:57)

If there was ever a woman who could have been myopic in her Christianity and turn the focus inwardly it would be a woman named Fanny Crosby. Yes, she lived a long time ago, no one's calling their kids Fanny anymore, I understand that. Fanny Crosby, she was blind and if you don't know her story by the malpractice of a quack doctor who once she was blinded by this doctor he fled town and was never heard from again. And you'd think that someone could turn to God in those times saying, why me, why me, God please I want consolation in my relationship with God, God please help me, comfort me, help me, I just want to enjoy my relationship with you and have you compensate for the loss of my sight. That wasn't her at all. She was evangelistically minded, blind minded. Now if you know the name, and you know a little history, you know she wrote loads of hymns, sometimes as many as seven a day. She loaded up enough hymns to fill three hymnals. Now this writer wasn't just about worship for herself, as a matter of fact, if you know her life, she would go out, much like D.L. Moody. If you got to the place in the day when D.L. Moody recognized I haven't shared the gospel with anybody yet, he would put his coat on in the middle of winter and he's go down on the street in downtown Chicago find someone and share the gospel with them just so he could have that sense of fulfilling his evangelistic passion. Fanny Crosby was much the same way. She would take her little stick, go downtown and she would, she'd sniff out the worst smelling person she could find, thinking this person must be ready for the gospel. And there she would share the gospel with someone. (48:37)

Now if an old lady, blind, with a blind walking stick can share the gospel by herself in some downtown area of her city don't you think you could invite someone to church at Christmas? Don't you think you could bring up a conversation about Christ? I love some of the hymns that she wrote, if you want to look her up you can see all the famous hymns that she wrote but one that doesn't get as much play as it should is an old hymn called 'Rescue the Perishing'. If you want the heart of a girl who got over herself to engage in life saving work, here's her heart in these



lyrics. 'Rescue the Perishing' in 1869. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying. Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave. Weep o'er the erring one. (Done that lately) Lift up the fallen. Tell them of Jesus, mighty to save. And here's the refrain. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying. Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save. Verse 2. Though they are slighting him. (and you know they are in our day more than ever) Still he is waiting. Patiently the penitent child to receive; Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently. He will forgive if they only believe. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying. Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save. The last line. Rescue the perishing, duty demands it. (whether you feel it or not) Strength for your labor the Lord will provide. Back to the narrow way patiently win them. Tell the poor wand'rer a Savoir has died. Rescue the perishing, care for the dying. Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save. If you believe that enough to respond to the duty and the call and start talking to people about Christ. You want the lowest bar in the whole year? Easter and Christmas, we're upon it now. Just invite someone to church, I'll team with you in this, we'll share the gospel with some people this December. Let's pray. (50:36)

God, help us in this church to see our need to reach people for Christ and it may be that some people here could not feel any conviction about distaining those with evangelistic passion. A lot of people I'm sure shrug their shoulders and go, "Oh whatever, they do what they do, that's just not my thing." But I pray that if we don't feel conviction about distaining people or resenting them being an annoyed by their evangelistic fervor I pray at least we have your Spirit work in our hearts to know that if we don't engage in it we're really not sharing the heart of Christ. We don't reflect the values of the Father, we're not engaged in the work of the Spirit. We just turned our attention inwardly and sitting our thinking we got ours, let's just wait for the Rapture. God help us to change our view to hasten the coming of the Lord by getting out there in the highways and byways as it was put in chapter 14 of Luke to compel them to come in. Knowing the fear of the Lord, let us persuade men, 2 Corinthians 5 says. That we might see the bus filled as I like to put it, that we might see the inauguration of the kingdom come soon. We're ready as we were taught to pray, come Lord Jesus. The end of the Bible says that, we can't wait for that. Jesus taught us to pray that way. Your kingdom come, your will be done. God, we know your will for us is to share the message of the gospel. My food, let it be true for us, is to do the will of him who sent me. Finish accomplish his work. God help us to be more like Christ to seek and save the lost this week. Let us bath that whole endeavor in prayer and then give us success in that, not so we can build a big number on a spreadsheet, not so we can just say our church is full, not so we can have a mega-church, it's not about any of that God. Help us to really have the motive we should have but be very careful never to resent the passion that should really grip our own hearts. See the lost, care for the lost and want their salvation. Thank you so much for the alarm clock of Luke 15, let it ring and resonate all week long in our hearts. In Jesus Name, Amen. (52:44)