

WHY DID JESUS COME

Today we are going to examine why Jesus came. Luke 19:10 says, ***“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*** Therefore, if we are going to adopt the same mission that Jesus had, we should also be seeking and saving the lost. But do we really know what this means? Running up to Christmas it would be very helpful if we could settle this issue in our minds.

The truth of the matter is that we are not just seekers, we are also hiders. A lot of us have a tendency to get lost – to hide from God. Hide and seek is a game that people have been playing with God since the garden. After the fall... After they ate the forbidden fruit. What did Adam and Eve do? They hid from God in bushes, and God’s people have been hiding ever since:

- Abraham hid in Egypt
- Moses hid in the wilderness
- David hid behind his crown
- Jonah hid in the belly of a huge fish

In this regard, I’d like to pose two questions:

(1) What do people hide behind? Today people hide from God behind things like;

- busyness, activity, pleasure, money, possessions
- religion, work, addictions, compulsive habits
- rituals, anger, relationships
- ignorance and many other things.

But whatever it is that people choose to hide behind, the goal, the purpose is always the same - to keep God distant, to keep God from seeing them.

(2) Why do people try to hide? There are as many reasons for hiding as there are places to hide. People try to hide from God because;

- They've done something wrong
- They want to do or they are doing something wrong
- They don't feel worthy or they feel God has let them down
- They are afraid of what God is going to do to them if He finds them

The bottom line is, people hide from God because they don't understand who God is. If they knew who God was, they would realise that; (a) you can't ever hide from God, and (b) you don't really need to hide from God. God Loves you! Have you ever wondered how God feels when you are lost? When you are hiding? When you have strayed? When you've left His path to follow your own? When God sees lost people, what does he see, how does he feel? What is His desire for them?

Turn to Luke chapter 15, beginning with the first verse... ***Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*** Notice that there were two groups of people gathered around Jesus at this time - sinners and tax collectors; and, pharisees and teachers of the law. Why were the sinners and tax collectors gathered around Jesus? They wanted to hear what He had to say. And why were the religious leaders upset? Because Jesus wasn't hanging out with them. Your see, in their minds, if Jesus really was the Son of God He would have treated those sinners like the outcasts that they were.

What these religious leaders couldn't comprehend was that people; regardless of race, education, colour, looks, economic standing, their past or their present condition - actually mattered to God. Which brings us to the first point in our outline:

Every Person Matters To God. Then Jesus told them this parable: *"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? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I 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."*

What we have here is a lost sheep, so let me ask you, what do you think the odds are that this sheep will make it back home on his own? Not very good. Bottom-line, sheep are not bright animals. Sheep are not leaders, they are followers. Therefore, what is the only hope this lost sheep has? That His Shepherd will search for him and find him. That's it – that is his only hope! And why would a shepherd do this? Because that lost sheep matters to him! Here's the point... Why did Jesus come to seek and save the lost? Because **people matter to God!** Look around this room.... Every face you see matters to God. And when you leave here and you go out to eat, or you go to the supermarket, or wherever, every face you see matters to God. It doesn't matter to God how or why people are lost. Whatever the reason He will go out after them. And God will go after them individually, because they each matter to Him personally. When God calls a man, he calls him personally. When God calls a woman he calls her personally. He tugs at the hearts of individuals, calling them one by one. It is a biblical pattern, repeated time and again.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. And when He walked the dusty streets, He went after lost people; passionately, individually and personally. No matter where they were... Who they were... Or what they were hiding behind... Jesus went after them!

- He went after Nathaniel as he sat under a fig tree
- He went after a woman who had been married five times
- He went after Peter as he was casting a net
- He went after Matthew as he sat behind a tax booth
- He went after an invalid as he lay by the pools of Bethesda
- He went after a prostitute as she anointed his feet with perfume
- He went after a crooked tax collector as he hung from a tree

Concerning the sheep in Jesus' story, it does have one thing going for it. This sheep knows that it is lost. Notice that the sheep does not say to the shepherd, "I'm not in such bad shape. There are other sheep far worse off than me - I'll be fine." No, this sheep is not in denial. It's eyes are wide open, it knows it is lost. It knows it needs to be saved. It is also interesting to note what the shepherd does not say. The shepherd does not come to the sheep and say the things that we would be tempted to say... *"You stupid sheep. You have only yourself to blame. What were you thinking of, wandering off like this? Why couldn't you be more careful? Didn't you know the path was narrow, and the cliff was steep and the countryside was filled with wolves? Didn't you know you this would get you in trouble? Don't come crying to me now that you have gotten lost. Yeah, it sure looks like lamb stew for you, my little wooly friend."* No, the shepherd doesn't say any of these things. Instead, the shepherd just opens his arms and puts the sheep on his shoulders and goes home. No condemnation, no lecture, just a shepherd so filled with compassion towards the sheep that when he finds it his heart melts.

Now, what do you think is going through the minds of the sinners and tax collectors as they heard this? *“No way Jesus, I can’t matter that much to God! Not me. Not where I’ve been, not with all I’ve done. I mean just look at me!”* But Jesus would respond, *“Oh yes you do! In fact, the Father has had party plates, cups, napkins and a banner with your name on it since the day He carefully made you in your mothers womb. And He’s been waiting all this time, to stop all the activity of heaven and throw a party for you on the day you come home. You’ve have always mattered to God”*

The next point in your outline is;

Every Person Is Valuable To God *“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? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”* What we need to understand here is that this was more than just a coin; it was a kind of wedding dowry. In that day there were 10 coins a married woman would wear around her headdress. So losing it would be like losing the diamond in your wedding ring. And what does she do? She lights the lamp, sweeps the house and searches carefully until she finds it! Why? Because the coin was **valuable** to her.

Let me ask you... Do you feel valuable? Not just when you are in church. But will you feel valuable tomorrow morning? Wednesday afternoon? Friday night? Do you feel valuable at home? At work? At school? And if you don’t feel valuable - why don’t you? Is it because;

- You’re not good looking enough or confident enough?
- You’re not smart enough or successful enough?

A well know writer said... Too often we base our self-worth on what the world views as valuable. The world thinks that money is a barometer of value, and if we do not have it in great amounts we feel bad about ourselves. Physical beauty has almost become a religion unto itself, and those without it feel no value in a society that judges by the looks on the outside. In this age of technology, IQ is often used to determine who is to be esteemed and who is to be shown to the basement. It is difficult for most of us to measure up to this value system. And the more we focus on the world's standards, the more negative we feel about ourselves.

God has a different system, and if our faith is in Him, we can feel tremendous relief. Christ talked about the worth of an individual. His words are good news to all of us who will never be fashion models, billionaires or members of the inner circle. However, Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He came to let every person know how valuable they are to God. And note, a lot of people Jesus came to did not feel all that valuable when they first met Him;

- the woman caught in adultery felt in John 8
- the crippled man in John 5
- the blind man in John 9
- the leper in Luke 17
- the demon possessed man in Mark 5
- the single mom (with the demon possessed daughter begging for food from the table) in Matthew 13
- Or the rich crooked tax collector in Luke 19

None of these people felt that valuable initially. But after Jesus came, they felt priceless! What do you think God sees when He looks at you - at this very moment? Maybe it will help you to answer that question by answering this one. What did Jesus see as He looked into the eyes of the sinners and tax collectors who were listening to Him tell this story for the very first time.

He saw great worth! Remember, God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited. And the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious life-blood of Jesus Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose to send His Son for this very purpose long before the world began. He was sent to the earth for all to see what God was prepared to sacrifice. And He did this for you and me. Could we get anymore valuable than that? And the ransom He paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for us with the precious blood of Jesus.

Listen – you are valuable – you are priceless – you are worthy of the precious lifeblood of Christ. And don't let anyone or anything tell you (or make you feel) otherwise. Not your parents, wife, husband, children, boss, friends, enemies, society - or your past, or your present. To God you are truly **valuable!**

The third and final point in your outline is;

God Wants Every Person To Come Home. Jesus continued: *"There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "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. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 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! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father."*

The father provided everything he could for his Son, but it wasn't enough. One day the son comes to his father and says, "Dad, I don't want to be here anymore, I don't want to live in this house any longer. In fact, I'm sick of living here – I gotta get out of here. And I don't want to wait for my inheritance either. I want you to give it to me – I want what's mine and I want it now!" How do you think the father felt as he watched his son turn his back and walk away down that dirt road?

But one morning as this young man was sitting in the pig-sty, he came to his senses. *"Hey, wait a minute, I don't have to live like this. I don't have to be here. I don't have to sit with the pigs and starve to death. I'm going home. Yes, that's what I'll do. At my father's house there is food to spare. I tell my father, 'Father I have sinned against heaven and against you and I am no longer worthy to be called your son, so could you let me be one of your servants'."* Then the story ends.. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him. "It looks like my son." the father thought! So he runs (something fathers in that culture never did), and was filled with compassion for him. This is only time we see God in a hurry! He threw his arms around him and kissed him. ***"Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."*** His son had come back, and that's all that mattered. What the father had lost was found!

This Christmas Season, remind yourself of these three facts:

- Every person matters to God
- People are valuable to God
- God wants every person to come home