

LESSON 12

Sharing the Joy of Salvation

Luke 15:1-7

This lesson highlights the joy that heaven experiences when even one sinner repents, as shown in Luke 15:7. Jesus' parable of the lost sheep illustrates God's deep love for individuals and His active pursuit of the lost. Instead of viewing evangelism as a duty, we are called to see it as a reason for celebration, something that brings joy to heaven and should bring joy to us as well. By aligning our hearts with God's, we learn to value each soul, rejoice over every conversion, and reignite our passion for sharing the gospel. Evangelism becomes more than just a task; it becomes a shared joy.

Class Objective: To help Christians celebrate the joy that comes when someone turns to God, and to inspire greater urgency and passion in our evangelism by seeing it from God's perspective.

Introduction

When you think about evangelism, what feelings come to mind? For many, it's fear, pressure, or guilt. But for Jesus, the emotion he emphasized wasn't fear; it was *joy*.

In Luke 15, Jesus shares a story about a shepherd who loses one sheep. He leaves the ninety-nine to find the one that's lost. When he finds it, he doesn't scold or sigh in frustration. Instead, he *rejoices* and tells his neighbors, "Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!"

Jesus ends the story with this statement: *"I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don't need repentance"* (Luke 15:7). He's pulling back the curtain to show us what God feels when someone turns to Him—pure joy.

This is the core of evangelism. Not just convincing people of the truth. Not just ticking a box. But sharing in the joy that happens when a lost soul is found. If we've forgotten that joy—or never truly understood it—then we've missed something vital.

Evangelism isn't just a duty. It's a celebration waiting to happen.

The Meaning of the Biblical Text: Luke 15:1-7

To understand Luke 15:7, we must consider who Jesus is speaking to and the reason why.

The chapter opens with tax collectors and sinners gathering around Jesus. The religious leaders, the Pharisees and scribes, are upset. They mutter, *“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them”* (v. 2). To them, Jesus was being too lenient on sin, too friendly with people who didn’t deserve it.

In response, Jesus tells a parable.

He asks, *“What man among you, who has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open field and go after the lost one until he finds it?”* (v. 4). The story is simple, but powerful. A shepherd leaves the flock to chase after one stray sheep. When he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders, returns home, and calls his friends to celebrate. *“I’ve found my lost sheep!”*

Then Jesus makes His point clear: *“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don’t need repentance.”*

Let’s break this down:

1. **God seeks the lost.**

The shepherd doesn’t wait for the sheep to come back. He goes looking. That’s how God responds to sinners. He doesn’t write them off. He pursues them.

2. **God rejoices when the lost are found.**

The tone here isn’t somber. It’s not disappointed or indifferent. It’s joyful. Finding the lost is a cause for celebration in heaven.

3. **Every person matters.**

A single sheep in a flock of one hundred may not seem like a big deal. But it matters to the shepherd. Jesus is showing that every individual soul has value to God.

4. **Heaven’s joy is a direct response to repentance.**

This isn’t just about the shepherd’s joy, it’s about heaven’s. Angels, God Himself, and the entire spiritual realm celebrate when even one person turns back to Him.

5. **The “ninety-nine righteous” are a contrast.**

Jesus may be referring here to the self-righteous religious leaders who didn’t see the need to repent. Their pride kept them from rejoicing in grace. In contrast, heaven throws a party when one broken person comes home.

This parable reframes evangelism. It’s not just about correction or obligation; it’s about rescue and celebration. Evangelism isn’t a chore; it’s joining in God’s mission of restoration. And when it succeeds, heaven celebrates.

Practical Teaching and Application

Evangelism can often feel intimidating. We worry about saying the right thing or being rejected. But Luke 15 reminds us why it’s worth it, because every soul matters, and because there’s *joy* when someone comes home to God.

Here are five key takeaways from Jesus' story:

1. God cares about individuals. So should we.

The shepherd noticed that *one* sheep was missing. He didn't shrug it off. He didn't say, "Well, at least I still have 99." He went after the one.

We tend to think in terms of crowds, church attendance, big events, outreach numbers. But God thinks in terms of people—one name, one face, one heart at a time.

That should change how we look at the people around us. Who's missing? Who's drifting? Who needs to be found?

2. Evangelism is about rescue, not recruitment.

Jesus doesn't picture evangelism as handing out information. He pictures it as going out into the wilderness to bring someone back.

People are lost, wandering, wounded, unsure how to get home. We're not selling something. We're helping them get rescued. That gives evangelism a sense of compassion, not pressure.

3. The result of a soul being saved is joy—both in heaven and on earth.

There's a reason Luke 15 repeats the word "rejoice" multiple times. Salvation isn't just relief; it's joy. That's how God reacts to repentance. That's how angels react. That's how we should react too.

Do we celebrate when someone is baptized? Do we praise God when a prodigal returns? Or do we act like it's no big deal?

Let's cultivate a church culture where every salvation is a party. Joy fuels more outreach.

4. If we don't feel the joy, we might be missing the mission.

Sometimes we lack passion for evangelism because we have lost sight of what it truly is about. It's not a checklist or a church growth strategy. It's about helping people find their way back to the Father.

If we've stopped caring, it's worth asking: Do I remember what it was like to be lost? Do I remember what it felt like to be found?

5. Evangelism is worth the effort—even for just one.

The shepherd had to leave the field, search through the wilderness, and carry the sheep home. It cost him time and energy. But he thought it was worth it.

We might hesitate to reach out because it feels awkward, slow, or unrewarding. But Jesus is clear: *even one soul* is worth it. That's how God sees people. And that's how we should see them too.

Conclusion

Jesus didn't tell the parable of the lost sheep to teach us about animals. He told it to show us how God feels about people. When one sinner repents, heaven rejoices. That reveals something important: evangelism is about *joy*... God's joy, the angels' joy, and our joy when we see someone turn to Him.

Too often, we treat evangelism like a burden. But to Jesus, it was a mission of love, and the outcome was celebration. If we want to reflect God's heart, we must learn to see every soul as worth pursuing, every act of outreach as part of something greater, and every conversion as a reason to rejoice.

God is still seeking the lost and invites us to join Him, not only in the work but also in the celebration. So let's take this seriously, care more deeply, and never stop celebrating the power of salvation, one life at a time.

For Discussion

1. Why does Jesus emphasize joy in heaven when one sinner repents? What does that reveal about God's heart?
2. How does this parable change the way we view evangelism—not simply as a duty but as a reason for celebration?
3. Have you ever personally seen someone come to Christ? How did that affect your faith and joy?
4. Why is it sometimes difficult for us to feel the same joy when others are saved? What prevents us?
5. Who is someone in your life right now who might be “the one”—someone God is calling you to pursue?

6. How can we foster a culture in our church that genuinely celebrates repentance and salvation?

7. How would your approach to evangelism change if you saw every soul through the eyes of Luke 15:7?