

Series: **1=3 - The truth about God and His nature – week 3**

CDOBC – beginning on 4/30/17

Today's Title: **“Our Loving and Redeeming God”**

Mother's Day! - May 14, 2017 - Luke 15

OBJECTIVE: To help people know God is love - and He has a passion to redeem lost people.

Opening Prayer

Thanks to Al Fadi for filling in last Sunday while Kim and I were in Hawaii...

We were not in Hawaii...we were at a Leadership Conference (<https://thriveconference.org>) in northern California - and were blessed through the speakers, the worship - and the comedians who were there.

Today is our third week looking at ‘*The truth about God and His nature*’. Two weeks ago, we looked at God as Creator, last week you looked at the holiness and righteousness of God.

The holiness of God tells us 2 primary things about Him:

He is transcendent and beyond anything in the universe and He is pure - morally pure - ethically perfect.

The righteousness of God also tells us 2 primary things:

God is just in everything He does - He always acts according to righteousness, so all His judgments are perfect. It's against His very nature to do anything unjust!

“Because God is a just judge, all His judgments are according to righteousness, so that He never acts in an unjust way; He never commits an injustice.”

(Everyone's a Theologian, an Introduction to Systematic Theology, by R.C. Sproul, p. 68-69)

Now, think about that in contrast to ourselves.

We are not sinners because we sin...we sin because in the core of our being, we are sinners.

Our inner-self, our inner-character is not holy or righteous - it is deeply flawed.

We cannot change ourselves. We cannot reform what is corrupt at its core - we must be changed and transformed by something pure - something holy and righteous.

This is why you must put your faith in Christ - you must be “born again” of God (John 3:3).

The problem...the struggle many people have when they learn about the holiness and righteousness of God is they think of Him as being and acting in ways that are harsh.

They see God as ruthless, demanding, stern and angry. (Far Side)

They see God as impatient toward people - eager to express His wrath and judgment toward sin.

We know this is true because so many Christians...so many churches are this way.

So many churches have this attitude toward the world - toward those struggling with sexual sin and sexual identity...toward those with addictions...toward those at the

bars and clubs drinking and partying...toward those whose lifestyle is not “Christian”.

Those churches tend to be closed off to the culture - unwilling to reach out with the Gospel and get involved with those who aren't already Christian.

They might not admit it, but in their mind and in their practice is an attitude which says, *“If those people want to come to our church, they need to get rid of that junk in their life first!”*

- My goal this morning is to help you see how opposite this is to God's character - how opposed to the heart of God this way of thinking is.
- My goal this morning is to help you see what the Bible says the heart of God is toward those who are lost.
- My goal this morning is you - our church - will be a church which is passionate about the things God is passionate about.

Turn to Luke 15

The audience and their problem vs. 1-2

1 “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Him.

Do you get excited when you read vs. 1?

Does vs. 1 challenge your notion of God?

Jesus attracted those who were far from God.

There was something about Jesus which was inviting to those who weren't religious - those who didn't live a religious lifestyle - those who were not normally in the Synagogue or at the Temple.

They wanted to know more about Jesus - they wanted to hear what He was talking about.

Is that true of you? Are people interested in the Jesus you have?

Is that true of our church?

If not...why not?

Could it be that our attitude is similar to those described in vs. 2?

2 And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

When you encounter those who on the outside appear to be far from God - what are your thoughts?

Do you view them as inferior - as the problem with the world today - do you "grumble" about them?

The audience Jesus is talking to are the Pharisees and the scribes - the religious leaders - and their problem is they "grumbled" when Jesus spent time with the "sinners".

Parable #1: The Lost Sheep vs. 3-7

3 So He told them (the grumbling religious people) this parable:

4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?"

5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'

7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.'"

Sheep wander.

Sheep will wander into danger, never realizing the danger until it is too late.

When a sheep wanders off, it doesn't come back - they aren't that smart. They simply wander and will continue to wander, which is why it's so important for the shepherd to keep track of the sheep and keep them together.

There is not only great danger when a sheep wanders from the herd and encounters a coyote, a lion or a bear, but there is great danger to the sheep simply due to being away from the herd and away from the shepherd.

I want to introduce you to Chris the sheep.

(<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3220414/Enormous-Canberra-sheep-overgrown-fleece-gets-haircut-years.html>)

From the website dailymail.com (Sept. 2015), near the capital city of Australia (Canberra), a sheep named Chris who had wandered from his herd and was lost for about 7 years, was found.

A sheep needs to be around its shepherd not only for protection, but to be cared for - to be sheared on

a regular basis. Chris' wool had become so heavy and had put such a strain on his body that animal welfare experts feared he would not survive.

They called in a 4-time national shearing champion to do the job of shearing Chris.

His wool weighed about 41 kilograms (about 90 lbs!) - double the sheep's body weight.

I think there's a truth...a principle here for those of us in the church - the "*sheep*" - that when we wander from the fold - from the herd - we expose ourselves to danger - and even when the lion or the bear don't find us, we are in danger simply by removing ourselves from the love and care of the shepherd.

On the surface, you might think the shepherd is being irresponsible and careless with the herd.

Why would he leave the 99 sheep - unattended in the "open country" - and search for the 1 lost sheep?

What if he found the 1 lost sheep, came back to the herd, only to discover 3 more had wandered off?

Answer: Sheep have a strong instinct to stay together - to follow each other - to be in a group or at least 4-5 other sheep while they are grazing.

How does our church act / operate? How do you act / operate?

Are you concerned about the “sheep” in the fold - or about the sheep who are lost?

Are you more concerned about how the sheep in the fold are doing - what they like - what they want - what they are comfortable with - or are you passionate about the lost sheep?

Are you willing to pour your focus and energy into finding the lost sheep?

Parable #2: The Lost Coin vs. 8-10

8 “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?”

9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’

10 Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The coins the woman had were each worth about 1 day’s wages. Not a huge amount of money, but still significant.

The lost coin did not present an imminent threat to the woman and her family - she still had 9 coins left, so she could still buy food and basic things needed for survival. But the 1 lost coin was important - significant in value:

- She light’s a lamp - when you’re looking for what’s lost you need to be a light in the darkness

- She sweeps the house - dirt floor - dusty - possibly creating a mess
- She was “diligent” - carefully - her search is not robotic or without deep, heartfelt concern - but she is thoughtful and exerts whatever effort is necessary in her search

Notice Jesus asks this (vs. 8) as a question - with the idea: “*Of course this is what any normal person would do!*”

This should not be unusual behavior!

What’s the big difference between this parable and the lost sheep parable?

The lost item is in the house - not in the wilderness.

Meaning / Interpretation: You can be in the house of God - and be very lost.

Notice her response when the lost coin is found - she has a party! She gets her friends together, and they celebrate - and as He told us in vs. 7 - so Jesus tells us again, this is what happens in Heaven when 1 sinner repents and puts their faith in Him.

Notice in vs. 7 that Jesus compares the celebration for the return of the 1 against the celebration of the 99

‘*righteous*’ people. (in contrast to the “grumbling” - vs. 2)

- Is it pleasing to God that you are ‘*righteous*’ and in the fold with the other sheep? **YES!**

- But *the greater passion of God is not in those who are in the fold*...but those who were lost and are found - brought into the fold - into the church - into the family of God!

This should not be a discouragement...it should be a motivation!

You want heaven to throw a party...then help the lost get found!

To live in the passionate heart of God, *“live out and share the Gospel”* (CDOBC vision statement) with those God has put into your circle of influence.

Parable #3: The Lost Son vs. 11-32

Read vs. 11-32 - with commentary

vs. 12: Culturally, “I wish you were dead - give me what I would receive upon your death”

vs. 12b - notice both of the sons received his stuff

vs. 13 - “a far country” - far from the influence or watchful eye of his father

vs. 13 - “squandered his property in reckless living” - in short time he lost everything. Sin is fun...but it will kill you!

James 1:15 “Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

vs. 14 - “began to be in need” - where were all his friends when he had money and was throwing parties and paying for everyone’s drinks?

vs. 15-16 - “to feed pigs” - not something a good Jewish boy would normally do - “Dirty Jobs” episode #1 - Hungry and alone - the slop which the pigs ate was better than anything he had to eat! “and no one gave him anything.”

Think about where he began...and where he ended up.

vs. 17-20a - He began to see the blessings he ignored and hated which he had in his father’s house. **Repentance!**

vs. 20 - The father’s love is seen in his continual watch for his son’s return. Culturally - a Jewish man of dignity and status would never run - but his love and compassion toward his son made cultural norms insignificant and unimportant.

vs. 21 - the son’s confession and ‘deal’ - confession and repentance

vs. 22 - The father didn’t ignore his son’s confession and repentance - but the ‘deal’ is ignored - the son’s status is not as a paid servant or employee (Gr: *misthios*) - but with all the rights and privileges of a son!

vs. 22-24 - Time to celebrate - throw a party - he thought his son might be dead - but he has returned...he is alive - and restored to the family!

vs. 25-27 - The older son - in the field busy doing work - doing good

vs. 28a - angry - see vs. 2

vs. 28b - the father literally begged the older son to join the party and celebrate

vs. 29-30 - the older son refuses to join the celebration - the younger son didn't deserve this celebration and joy - he deserved this celebration and joy because he was "slave" and obeyed - his younger brother disobeyed and "devoured" (consumed until gone) his property with "prostitutes".

HE DOESN'T DESERVE YOUR LOVE AND CELEBRATION...I DO!!!!

vs. 31 - I have always been here for you. Do you crave God's 'stuff' - or do you crave God?

Abrupt end...don't you want to know what happened? The point is not the end...but who are you most like? Which son was really lost? (*Both...but the oldest was more lost and farther away from the father - even though he was in the house!*)

Why do you obey God? Is it to get 'stuff' from Him?

Or...because you enjoy Him and love Him?

Do you celebrate when a lost person is found by

Christ...or do you celebrate yourself?

Apply it...

"Our Loving and Redeeming God"

God is love - "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." 1 John 4:8

God is the Redeemer - He is passionate about saving people - redeeming them from their sin.

Isaiah 43:11

“I, I am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior.”

Isaiah 43:25

“I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

Hebrews 8:12

“For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

Hebrew 10:17

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

All the perfections of God are in perfect balance - no perfection outweighs His other perfections.

His love doesn't outweigh His righteousness or justice.

The 3 parables of **Luke 15** were taught by Jesus not to teach His love and redeeming nature are of greater force than His other perfections, but to address the tendency religious people have to turn a blind eye and develop a callous and hard heart toward those who are lost.

These parables help us see God's heart for the lost and His passion to find those who are lost - so we can have the same heart He has.

Ephesians 5:1-2

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us...”

Emulate the perfections of God

Holiness...righteousness...love - we must imitate God and practice these traits in our own life.

God's holiness and righteousness does not overpower His love, mercy, kindness or grace. His holiness and righteousness does not cause Him to look down on those who are not holy and righteous.

Luke 19:10

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Mark 6:34

"When He went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd."

How do you look at the crowds at the mall - at the grocery store - at the park - at the restaurant - or your neighbor - your co-workers?

Do you have the eyes and heart of God?

Be uncomfortable for the sake of the lost

Being in church is not about your comfort - or what you like - or your preferences. The moment you begin to view church as a place to be comfortable you have taken the passion off the lost and put it on yourself.

It's not comfortable to go on a search for the lost sheep - it's much easier to have a seat and keep an eye on the 99.

It's not comfortable to light the lamp and sweep the dirt floor and create a mess as you search for the lost.

It's uncomfortable to give grace - because grace is inherently unfair - giving what is undeserved and unearned.

But we are called by grace...and we are called to give grace.

Each week - for the past few months - I've been closing the service with a phrase:

***You are blessed...because you are loved...
so be a blessing!***

I don't intend for this to be some trite saying - I intend this to be the final thought of our time together - to send you out of this place on mission. Our Sunday gathering is not the point of your week - it's the rally point...the huddle to encourage, prepare you - *to mobilize you and equip you to transform our community for Christ by living out and sharing the Gospel.* (CDOBC Vision statement)

Church is not the point of your faith.

The point of your faith is to find those who are lost - and in the process, you will grow stronger in your faith as you must live out your faith in the world.

Are you ready to imitate God? To reflect His character - to put flesh onto the loving and redeeming nature of God?

Won't you live each day - with the passion to find those who are lost?

Close in prayer