

Seeing the Ones Everyone Else Misses

Text: Luke 15:1–32 (NIV)

Theme: God's Heart for the Lost

Big Idea: If we are going to be spiritual lifesavers, we must learn to see people the way Jesus sees them—with compassion, value, and hope.

Introduction

One of the most difficult jobs in the world belongs to a lifeguard. A good lifeguard doesn't simply watch the water; he watches the people. He learns to recognize subtle signs of someone who is struggling. Often, the person who is drowning isn't yelling for help. They are quietly slipping beneath the surface.

Spiritually, many people are drowning the same way. They smile at work, attend school events, post happy pictures on social media, and seem to have everything together. Yet inside they are overwhelmed by guilt, loneliness, addiction, broken relationships, depression, or the emptiness that only Christ can fill.

The greatest danger facing many Christians is not that we stop believing the gospel—it is that we stop seeing the people who desperately need it.

Jesus never lost sight of people.

Luke 15 reveals the very heartbeat of God.

Read Luke 15:1–7

Luke 15:1–2 (NIV)

"Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'"

Notice the contrast.

The religious leaders saw sinners as interruptions.

Jesus saw them as invitations.

The Pharisees saw labels.

Jesus saw people.

The Pharisees saw failures.

Jesus saw future disciples. Every person you pass this week matters deeply to God.

I. Lifesavers Notice Those Others Ignore

The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3–7)

A shepherd owns one hundred sheep.

One wanders away.

Ninety-nine remain safely in the fold.

Jesus says the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to search for the one.

That sounds irrational by human standards.

But heaven measures value differently.

Why?

Because every person bears the image of God.

Every soul has eternal value.

Every life matters.

Application

We naturally notice successful people.

We notice people who can help us.

Jesus noticed people nobody else wanted.

- Lepers
- Blind beggars
- Tax collectors
- Prostitutes
- Samaritans
- Demoniacs

The church must develop eyes like Jesus.

Sometimes the people who need Jesus the most are sitting quietly in our own sanctuary.

Sometimes they're our neighbors.

Sometimes they're family.

Sometimes they're coworkers.

Sometimes they're the person nobody speaks to.

Illustration

A lifeguard constantly scans the water.

His eyes never stop moving.

He doesn't assume everyone is safe simply because they're floating.

Christians need spiritual eyes that continually scan for hurting people.

II. Lifesavers Search Until They Find

"Until he finds it..."

Jesus emphasizes persistence.

The shepherd does not search for five minutes.

He doesn't say, "I tried."

He searches until.

That little phrase changes everything. Love doesn't quit quickly. Neither does God.

Cross References

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

"The Lord... is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

Luke 19:10

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

Jesus is still searching.

Sometimes He searches through us.

Application

Many Christians give up after one invitation.

One unanswered text. One rejected conversation. One "No thanks."

But rescue work requires perseverance.

Never underestimate what persistent prayer can accomplish.

III. Lifesavers Celebrate Every Rescue

The shepherd finds the sheep.

What happens?

He rejoices.

He calls friends together. There is celebration. Jesus says heaven erupts in joy over one sinner who repents.

Think about that.

Heaven celebrates conversions more than accomplishments.

We celebrate promotions. Heaven celebrates repentance. We celebrate championships.

Heaven celebrates salvation. We celebrate retirement. Heaven celebrates redemption.

Sometimes churches celebrate attendance.

Jesus celebrates transformed lives.

Healthy churches rejoice whenever anyone comes home.

IV. The Lost Coin

(Read Luke 15:8–10)

Unlike the sheep... The coin didn't wander. It couldn't cry for help. It simply remained lost.

The woman lights a lamp.

Sweeps the house. Searches carefully. Until she finds it.

Some people don't even realize they're lost. They have become comfortable without God.

They need someone to shine the light.

Cross Reference

Matthew 5:14

"You are the light of the world."

We are called to illuminate dark places.

V. The Lost Son

(Read selected portions of Luke 15:11–32)

This story shows the heart of the Father.

Notice what the father does not do.

He doesn't stop loving. He doesn't stop watching.

He doesn't stop hoping.

Every day he scans the horizon.

Finally...

He sees his son. Before the son reaches home—The father runs.

Middle Eastern patriarchs did not run.

Running exposed their legs and was considered undignified.

Yet love outruns dignity. Grace outruns shame. Mercy outruns guilt.

This is the gospel.

God runs toward repentant sinners.

VI. Beware of Becoming the Older Brother

Many churches are filled with older brothers.

The older brother stayed home...

Worked hard... Obeyed...

Yet his heart was far from the father's. He became angry when grace was extended.

The older brother loved rules more than rescue.

He loved fairness more than forgiveness. He loved religion more than relationship.

True holiness never produces spiritual pride.

Entire sanctification does not diminish our compassion—it deepens it.

A heart made holy increasingly reflects the compassionate heart of Christ.

The Holy Spirit cleanses us from self-centeredness so we may love people as Jesus loves them.

Holiness and evangelism belong together.

The holier we become, the more we will care about those who are still far from God.

VII. Jesus Is the Ultimate Lifesaver

Luke 15 isn't ultimately about sheep. Or coins. Or sons.

It's about Jesus.

He came searching. He entered our broken world. He sought us while we were running away.

Romans 5:8 reminds us:

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Before we ever searched for Him—

He searched for us.

Before we became lifesavers—

We were the ones drowning.

Conclusion

Every story in Luke 15 teaches the same truth:

- Something valuable was lost.
- Someone went searching.
- The lost was found.
- Heaven rejoiced.

That is the mission of the church. Not merely to gather the found. But to seek the lost.

The Church should be the safest place for broken people to encounter the grace of Jesus Christ.

Imagine what God could do if every believer became intentional about seeing the people everyone else overlooks.

One invitation. One conversation. One prayer. One act of kindness. One gospel presentation. One life changed forever.

Invitation

Perhaps today you identify with one of these people.

You are the lost sheep. You have wandered far from God, but the Good Shepherd is calling you home.

You are the lost coin. You may feel forgotten or insignificant, but you have never lost your value in God's eyes.

You are the prodigal son. You've traveled far from the Father's house, yet the Father is watching for your return and is ready to receive you with grace.

Or perhaps you identify with the **older brother**. You've been faithful in outward obedience, but your heart has grown cold toward those who are lost. Ask God to renew your compassion and give you His heart.

Today, Jesus is still seeking and saving the lost. He stands ready to forgive, restore, and transform every person who comes to Him in faith.