

## Seeing the Savior of the Good News – Winsome 1.19.2020

The tension in the air was so thick you could've cut it with a knife. As he watched the scene unfold, he knew that it was going to be a tense situation. After all, it had been like this for almost three years. He had seen this unfold time and time again. That rabbi from Nazareth was here; and, he was well known. Years of miracles, teaching to crowds large and small, and controversies he stirred up within the most educated and well-respected scholars. It was inevitable at this point, the only question in his mind was, how will it all end? Well, there was one more. What if this Jesus fellow, really was who he claimed to be? What if he was the messiah?

Today, at this moment, he will assume his normal position, the older and wiser scholars will be at the front; he will be there to listen, learn, and watch. What he is about to see and hear will challenge his perspectives and possibly, change his life.

### He who has ears...Let him hear.

Jesus has been on the move for a little while now, and he has been teaching along the way. The crowds that began to follow him in chapter 14, have mostly dispersed, but there are a few who press-in to hear more. The question is, who are they, and what does Jesus want them to hear? We are going to find that in order to see and to hear Jesus, your heart must be in the right place.

1. **We should not let the modern chapter division make us miss an important point.** Jesus has just made an uncompromising demand for whole-heartedness as he showed what following him meant. **He finished with 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear'. Luke's very next words tell us that these sinners came near to hear him.** Whatever the case with the Pharisees and their like, these sinners had been challenged. They knew what discipleship meant. They were called on to hear. And they heard.<sup>1</sup>
2. **There is a rich cast of characters:** The hyper-religious & regular people.
3. **The Hyper-Religious** - Pharisees & Scribes –
  - a. In most historical reconstructions of Jewish society, the categories used to describe these groups, such as sect, school, upper class, lay leadership, etc.<sup>2</sup>
  - b. Paul would have been in this camp – Phil 3:5
    - i. **...circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;**<sup>3</sup>
4. **The Regular People** - Tax collectors & sinners –
  - a. The *tax collectors* were not highly regarded, for they both helped the hated Romans in their administration of conquered territory and enriched themselves

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<sup>1</sup> Morris, L. (1988). [Luke: an introduction and commentary](#) (Vol. 3, p. 255). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Saldarini, A. J. (1992). [Pharisees](#). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 5, p. 289). New York: Doubleday.

<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Php 3:5). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

at the expense of their fellow-countrymen. They were ostracized by many and regarded as outcasts by the religious.<sup>4</sup>

- b. The *sinner*s were the immoral or those who followed occupations that the religious regarded as incompatible with the Law.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. Stage left – The Disciples

- a. They were most certainly there, even though they are not mentioned specifically.
- b. **Ministry phase of Jesus: Phase 5 – Leadership multiplication.**
  - i. This is the phase where Jesus is preparing his disciples for life after his ascension.
  - ii. **Luke 10-19 takes anywhere from 2-6 months.**
  - iii. At this phase / point in time... **Why does Jesus tell his disciples this now? What does he want them to learn?**
- c. “Let him hear...” – Jesus had just made an uncompromising point into the cost of discipleship. (14:35)
  - i. How did the each set of characters approach Jesus at this moment? What was their attitude and posture?
  - ii. “the Pharisees and scribes **grumbled** saying...” (15:2)
    - 1. This is pretty clear what the religious leader’s attitudes and postures were in this moment.
      - a. They were not pleased with Jesus’ previous comments, how the “sinners” responded, Jesus’ response to the “sinners”, or what it meant for them.
      - b. If we fast forward the story, we are going to see this seed of discontent fester and grow into full rebellion and ultimately the execution of Jesus.
    - 2. Pride, self-confidence, racism, and prejudice blinded and corrupted the religious leaders.
  - iii. The tax collectors and sinners, “draw near to hear”.
    - 1. There is a clear indication of wanting to learn more.
      - a. They had just heard about the cost of discipleship, and they wanted to know more.
- d. **Hearing does not equate obedience.**
  - 1. The religious leaders heard and rejected.
    - a. That is not obedience!
  - 2. The tax collectors & sinners heard... but we’re not told if they obey.
    - a. A caution for you and me: Just because we hear something and we’re not directly opposed to it, doesn’t mean we have obeyed or been transformed by it.
- e. “Let him hear...” – Jesus isn’t saying let him hear and agree but do nothing.

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<sup>4</sup> Morris, L. (1988). [\*Luke: an introduction and commentary\*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 255). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>5</sup> Morris, L. (1988). [\*Luke: an introduction and commentary\*](#) (Vol. 3, p. 255). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

- i. Jesus expects that when we hear, we respond in obedience.
  - 1. This should be very clear to us!
    - a. No parent / boss / coach / teacher expects to be “heard” and nothing to be done about it.
- ii. **My heart will dictate if “hearing” is actually “hearing”.**
  - 1. Am I filled with pride or insecurity?
  - 2. Am I filled with honesty or availability?
  - 3. Am I teachable or hostile?
- iii. **Do I see the source as good, reliable, and trustworthy?**
  - 1. The religious leaders didn’t. → They saw Jesus as hostile and heretical.
  - 2. The tax collectors & sinners did. → They saw Jesus as kind and good.
    - a. Consider a time in your life where rejected something incredibly important and helpful because you saw the source as corrupted.
    - b. **How do you see God / Jesus in your life today?**
      - i. **Good & trustworthy?**
      - ii. **A disappointment & failure?**
      - iii. **Tyrannical & Fickle?**
      - iv. **Supportive & Sustaining?**
- iv. **Jesus wants them and us to see that he is enough for all of us, no matter what walk of life we come from.**

### **Our God is a seeking God.**

Jesus knows all of the characters in this scene very well. He has been teaching, performing miracles, and walking around Palestine for the last three years. This isn’t the first conversation he has had with them, and it won’t be the last. Like many times before, he teaches with a story that is layered with truth for each person (no matter their social status) to wrestle with. At this moment, he will teach using three different stories (parables), the first being about a shepherd who has lost a sheep. In this parable, a tremendous truth emerges that he doesn’t want us to miss. God is like the shepherd who searches for his lost sheep, and no matter how long it takes, he won’t give up. The crowds that pressed in at this moment understood exactly what shepherding in the first century was all about. For you and me, we need to dig in a little. But, the truth is the same. God is intentionally seeking after you.

### **The wrong kind of people are welcomed and sought out by God.**

On this day, as Jesus had done many times before, he spent time with those the religious elite thought to be “irreparable” and the wrong kind of people. Jesus shared the opinion of the Father; no one is irreparable. And in fact, we are all the wrong kind of people. We all share the same spiritual brokenness that sin has brought on us because we are all sinful (Eph.2:3). Jesus was trying to teach everyone in the crowd that day this truth. We are broken and in need of rescue. It doesn’t matter what side of the tracks we grew up on, what our income or vocation is, and it certainly doesn’t matter if we are “religious.” **We are all broken and lost; and, God**

loves all of us enough to search after us passionately! Jesus is going to use a story about a lost sheep to illustrate this truth.

1. Spoiler alert: We are all the wrong kind of people! (Eph. 2:3)
  - a. "All" → Language is really important. - πᾶς (pas)
    - i. It means ALL!
      1. We all start in the same place. We have nothing to offer, nothing to give, nothing to convince, and nothing to bribe our way into God's favor.
      2. We lived in the passions of our flesh... apart from God. Doing life on our terms and in our way.
    - b. The religious leaders thought they had it nailed down.
      - i. To love God was to obey the law.
        1. And, in return for my obedience God would reciprocate love and bless me and my family.
      - ii. "These" tax collectors and sinners didn't obey the law and so there is no way for them to be loved by God, or to love God themselves.
    - c. Jesus' response to let the tax collectors & sinners draw near and dine with him, went against everything that they understood to be right and holy!
      - i. Jesus wanted the religious elite to see that they were in the same state of rebellion as the tax collectors and sinners!
        1. Isaiah 64:6 - **We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.** <sup>6</sup>
        2. All of their "worship and obedience" was in vain, they had never come to see Jesus correctly. → As the messiah.
2. God is a God who seeks. → The lost sheep.
  - a. This is a revolutionary idea for Jesus' audience.
    - i. It might be for you and me too!
  - b. Let's consider Jonah's story.
    - i. Jonah was a great prophet! → He brokers an international peace deal. (2 Kings 14:25)
    - ii. God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh → Jonah isn't thrilled... putting it mildly.
      1. Jonah refuses to go, instead he boards a ship for Tarshish.
      2. Tarshish is in Spain and is one of the farthest known locations in the world at that time.
        - a. Jewish culture didn't see the sea as a positive thing.
        - b. It was often described as evil. → Jonah would rather venture to the unknown and into something that is destructive than to follow God.
    - iii. Jonah believes that he is "out of God's sight" in Tarshish.
      1. If God can't see him, he can't make him go to Nineveh.
      2. God sends a whale to teach Jonah (and us) that he isn't limited by geographical boundaries.
    - iv. God sent Jonah because he wanted to seek out the Assyrian people.

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<sup>6</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Is 64:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

1. **And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?”**<sup>7</sup>
2. Jonah was a bad missions partner, and yet Nineveh repented.
  - a. They were the wrong kind of people!
- c. The reality of God’s seeking nature is present in Jonah’s story... they missed it and so Jesus tells three stories to help them “hear” it.

### 3. The lost sheep. (v.3-7)

- a. Who were shepherds and what did they do?
  - i. **The task of the shepherd was to care for the flock**, to find grass and water, to protect it from wild animals (Am 3:12), to look for and restore those that strayed (Ez 34:8; Mt 18:12), to lead the flock out each day going before it and to return the flock at the close of the day to the fold (Jn 10:2–4).<sup>8</sup>
  - ii. At times the shepherd led the flock far from home and sheltered the animals by night in a cave or sheepfold built of fieldstones; he would lie across the entrance.<sup>9</sup>
  - iii. They weren’t always trust worthy people.
    1. It was a common understanding from the Mishnah (interpretations of Jewish law) that shepherds weren’t allowed to testify in court.
- b. Why would shepherd search for a lost sheep?
  - i. **The shepherd was responsible to the owner for every sheep and was required to make restitution for losses** (Gn 31:39; Ex 22:10–13).<sup>10</sup>
    1. If a sheep was lost, the shepherd didn’t simply pay cost for the sheep, they paid market price for it!
  - ii. It was the shepherd’s job to care and protect the sheep.
    - a. Having to pay market price is a strong accountability factor.
    2. If a sheep was killed by a wild animal, the shepherd was required to provide physical evidence of the attack.
    3. If a sheep was lost the shepherd would have to **at least** find evidence of an attack via wild animal so that he wouldn’t have to pay for the lost sheep.
      - a. **You can imagine the joy a shepherd would have had, if the lost sheep was found alive!**
  - iii. **A shepherd pursued the lost sheep because the lost sheep was valuable to them!**

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<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jon 4:11). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>8</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Trades and Occupations](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 2090). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

<sup>9</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Trades and Occupations](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, pp. 2090–2091). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

<sup>10</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Trades and Occupations](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 2091). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

## We only seek after what is valuable... So does God.

I'm not sure about you, but I don't spend much time, money, or energy seeking after things that I don't value. But, the things that I do value, I will run after them without abandon in some cases. Thirteen years ago, when I was getting ready to propose to Danielle, I knew one thing, I wanted her to know how much I loved her by the ring I bought for her. Her taste in jewelry is simple, and as an aspiring youth pastor, I appreciated that. And while the ring needed to be simple, it had to express how much she meant to me. My father had taught me that a man is measured by a handful of things in his life. First, his willingness to put an honest day's work in, second, his relationship with his barber, and third, the 3-C's, cut, clarity, and carats. The stone in her ring wasn't going to be huge, but it was going to be perfect. After finding the exact right ring and seeing the price tag, I went back to my dorm room and began to plan how to pay for it. I had some money saved up, but I would need some more. And there beside my desk, laid two guitars and a Marshall tube amp. I loved and valued those items. But I sought something more valuable. That afternoon, two guitars and an amp were listed on eBay. A week later, I had the cash in hand to buy the perfect ring for the perfect girl.

I am willing to bet that you have had an experience in your life like this — one where you sought after something without abandon because you valued it so very much. Again, Jesus uses this parable about a lost sheep to tell us that is how God feels about you and me. **He values and loves us so much that he sought us out without abandon. He sent his one and only son for you to demonstrate how much he values you.**

1. This is a self-evident truth.
  - i. We do not give resources / time / attention to the things that we don't value.
    1. Just consider the things you did this week. Why did you do them?  
How much attention did you give to them?
  - ii. What we see as valuable doesn't have to be material.
    1. Attention / Approval / Respect / Attention
2. **God seeks what he finds valuable.**
  - i. This is the big idea of the parable!
3. **This speaks to our identity. → Jesus is trying to communicate something about how God sees us.**
  - i. You and I are so valuable to God, that even when we are lost, he seeks and searches after us.
  - ii. We haven't done anything to make ourselves valuable (Eph. 2:3).
    1. **Side note:** Church people some of us need to repent from the spiritual pride that blinds us into thinking that our "good deeds / righteousness" bring us favor with God.
      - a. **There is nothing we have done, could do, or will do that will bring us favor with God. It is something he initiates, gives, and sustains.**
      - b. We foolheartedly live as if we have a transactional relationship with God. (If I do this... Then you do that...)
  - iii. **God sees us as valuable because he created us to share in his love and presence.**

1. **God created the world and us, because there was so much goodness and love in him that he desired to share it.** – Alan Fadling
- iv. **God sends what’s most valuable (His Son), to search for what is lost.** (Lk. 19:10)
  1. Jesus is one with the Father, their hearts are turned towards one another, they have been together since the beginning, they (along with the Spirit) were active in the creative process, and they loved us enough to send and be sent for our rescue. (John 1; 3:16; 10:30, 15:1-17)
  2. God sent his perfectly good son, because we need to be reminded of how good a life with God can truly be.
    - a. John 1:46 → Philip to Nathanael, “Come and see...”
    - b. God sent his perfect son for you. Because even in the difficult state of our brokenness God desires for us to be made whole.  
**And, he wants to restore what he loves and finds value in.**
4. A story about sheep, that isn’t about sheep, but is instead about you, me, and God’s radical love for us.
  - i. All through the OT, God was trying to show us this picture of his perfect love and pursuit. He knew that every example would fall short except for the perfect one.
  - ii. He knew that we would need to evaluate all the “what if” scenarios before we would be ready to “Come and see” the one who is truly good... Jesus.
    1. Both groups came to “see and hear” from Jesus that day. Their hearts and attitudes dictated what they saw and heard.

This is a story about sheep, that is not about sheep at all. It is about you, me, and God’s radical love and pursuit for us. God has always been a God who searches and seeks his valuable children out. He has always been a God of great generosity and faithfulness. And with that, when we “come and see” him for who he truly is, we will not be compelled by fear or manipulation; but instead, we will be compelled by love and hope to invite others to come and see this very good God who changes lives.

**Because we love God... we love to share what God loves to do.**

From: Winsome – Seeing the Savior of the Good News  
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