

December 16, 2018
(A Savior for All Nations Series)
“God’s Love”, Luke 15

As this morning, we light the “love” and “joy” candles of our Advent Wreath, we are visibly reminded to come to Jesus with our brokenness and rediscover God’s joyful love for each of us. Jesus Himself gave “tax collectors, sinners, and Pharisees, and teachers of the law” (Luke 15:1,2) pictorial reminders of God’s compassionate love in the three parables in Luke 15 of “The Lost Sheep”, “The Lost Coin”, and “The Lost Son”.

Jesus tells us that like the shepherd who searches ceaseless and finally rescues his one lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7), the Father values us as well because we are precious and a part of His flock. How joyous we are in this same love of the Shepherd who joyfully carried the forlorn sheep home on His shoulders. Jesus proclaimed there will be “more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Luke 15:7).

In just three verses (Luke 15:8-10), Jesus told the broken people of His time that just like the woman who searched diligently for one lost coin (10% of her money) and publicly shared it with her friends and neighbors, our Father proclaims “there is much rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

The parable of “The Lost Son”, in its greater detail (Luke 15:11-31), tells us of the rejoicing of a father who literally runs to welcome the return of His younger son who has squandered his inheritance and returned home in shame and repentance. The father’s intense compassion and joy for this wayward son causes him to embrace and kiss his son, and bring on an elaborate celebration. In spite of the older son’s anger and self righteous arrogance, the father explains that the celebration is “because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Luke 15:32). Our Father’s heart surrounds us with love and joy as we run to Him in our brokenness and find ourselves “alive”.

These parables are repeated in modern day stories, eg.: Calvin and his cat Figaro (The Lost Sheep), the heirloom ring of Esther (The Lost Coin), and the near drowning of the daughter of Len and Judy Everswick in Zimbabwe (The Lost Son). God continues to offer his love through his Son Jesus, who became a man and died for all people throughout the world, no matter what they have done. As people recognize their brokenness and failures and come to Jesus, God’s heart rejoices and He welcomes each person into His Kingdom with deep, compassionate love. As our own hearts rejoice in this amazing love, we respond with a prayer of faith if we are new believers or with action if we are disciples. As disciples, we pray that we will become the physical manifestation of the love of God to others, through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions:

1. When was the last time you connected with God with your emotions, not just your mind? What were the emotions? Anger, doubt, gratitude, love, etc.?
2. Which of the three parables do you relate to the most? Explain.
3. Who was God in all three parables? What does each one say about God’s love?

4. Discuss where you are in your prodigal son/daughter faith walk - broken, repentant, or joyously thankful for forgiveness and grace? Be honest.
5. Practice with each other how you would describe the story of the prodigal son to a seeker?
6. How exactly do you personally or together with your small group, act as “the physical manifestation of the love of God to others”?

** For meditation: Give us eyes to see those around us, and those worldwide, who need God’s love. May we act when we do see these needs....chatting, inviting, working along side, serving, praying for others to enter the Kingdom of God’s love.