

# The God who Seeks us Out

## Resources to Go Deeper:

**Video Resource/Study:** Tim Keller - Prodigal God <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/Series/226>

**Bible App for Kids:** "Coming Home" <https://bibleappforkids.com/>

## The Kingdom of God is Like...?

Last week we look at a parable that talked about wheat and weeds. The thing is that if we take that parable in isolation, it is easy to get the idea that God is only concerned with the "wheat" and not at all concerned with those who are outside God's family...

The parables we have this week paint a different picture...

The passage opens with a scene where Jesus is teaching and attracting the kinds of hearers that any good Jew, like Jesus, knew to avoid...

**Luke 15:1-3 NIV**

<sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. <sup>2</sup> But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." <sup>3</sup> Then Jesus told them this parable:

The underlying question that started it all... *Why is Jesus associating with people that God doesn't care about?*

**This question clearly hit a nerve, demonstrated a profound misunderstanding of God's character, as Jesus goes on to offer three parables which talk about it...**

## God's Crazy Love for the Lost...

**Luke 15:4-7 NIV**

<sup>4</sup> "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders <sup>6</sup> and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' <sup>7</sup> I tell you that in the same way 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 15:8–10 NIV**

<sup>8</sup> “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ <sup>10</sup> In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

And after this, in Luke 15:10-32, Jesus tells a long and well known parable about a man with two sons where took the inheritance early, ran off and eventually came back seeking forgiveness... Lets just say that the dad was happy to see this lost son and the more responsible brother was annoyed...

All three of these stories would have been shocking for those who heard...

- We would call the shepherd who abandons 99 to find one irresponsible...
- We would call the woman who turns the house upside down to find one coin obsessive...
- We would call the father who welcomes the prodigal son back foolish... (Those who heard this story in his day certainly would have...)

Yet Jesus uses all three of them to illustrate the way that God loves humanity, especially those who are lost... God is not casually disinterested...

***God’s love, properly understood, seems crazy to us...***

**Can you think of some examples of how God demonstrates this love throughout the Bible?**

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This love of God is active, seeking us out, prepared to move past all that is respectable and safe, most fully demonstrated in the life and ministry of Jesus... God doesn’t stay at a safe distance...

**What might this look like for you to demonstrate this kind of love towards those around you?**

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# Continuing Jesus' ministry... Demonstrating this pursuing love

These parables should be deeply challenging to us, as it seems to me that many people perceive the church to be more like the pharisees in this story than Jesus... That is a **huge** hurdle to overcome...

We should be reminded that God loves the people in Milton more than we ever could... Our task is to demonstrate something of that love...

Where does connecting with God's lost sons and daughters fit into the list of priorities? It can't be something we do in our spare time, when we have resources to spare...

Is our life together primarily about a comfortable routine or worship, or primarily about sharing Jesus with our community, welcoming the lost and celebrating when they find a place in God's family?

Is all of our ministry and mission primarily about people finding us here, on our territory, or are we prepared to go where people are, speak in a way that they understand and go outside of our comfort zone to do it...

**What might this look like for us as a church to demonstrate this kind of love towards those who live around us in Milton?**

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**What might it look like to embody the attitudes of the pharisees in this story? Have you seen that happen?**

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## Demonstrating this Love as a Christian Community

One of the biggest tragedies in the modern world is that many folk outside the church don't have the impression that God loves them, longs to know them or that they will be welcome if they come to a church... Especially if life is messy and hard...

Exactly when people need the love and embrace of God's people is exactly when they feel like

they won't be accepted... We cannot afford to be a superficial or cliquey community...

One of the biggest tragedies in the church is when life gets hard and people drift away... And nobody notices... This can be really difficult to do in a centralized way once a church gets larger than about 50 attendees, it is a task for the whole community... (And is REALLY hard right now with COVID-19)

This comes down to practical behaviors and priorities... What gets our attention, what gets the time, what can each member do to help us to be a community that demonstrates this love... It doesn't work if just the minister does it...

- To make an effort to welcome and connect with those who arrive in the community
- To make an effort to check in on one another from time to time... (Without being weird stalkers)
- To journey alongside one another when times are hard...
- To reach out to those who are lost or missing... They might not listen to anyone else, but they might listen to you...

**What is one thing that you can do to demonstrate this kind of love to people you know when life is hard?**

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**As a church, how can we help you with this?**

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**Is there someone you might call and check in on? Just to see how they are going? To show them some love during the COVID-19 isolation? (And if so, when do you plan to do this)**

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Are we prepared to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this, are we prepared to give up what is comfortable, to risk awkwardness, to look a bit undignified...

Do we take the time to celebrate as a church, like what we hear happens in heaven, when someone who is lost finds their way back? The way that we welcome people here matters, the way that we celebrate these faith milestones matters.

Do we also take the time to grieve those who are still lost, individually and together, those who drift away? Do we still pray for them.

**Who is someone who is lost, who you can pray for today?**

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This isn't a task for one person, or a task for a small group, it is the task of the whole community.

This isn't a task that we do on our own, but something only possible from the holy spirit working in and through us.