

Grace for the Outcasts

INTRO: A few years ago I threw my own birthday party, first time with my smoker, about 50 or so people milling about, Party Van playlist. Great time. Lady came in. She was "Sweet Susan". Separated. Husband not in a good spot.. Pulls me aside. He walks in, and it's awkward. At the party, but they are not having fun. Fitting to talk about parties. Luke 15

Four Points:

- The True Audience / The Joyful Pursuit / The Bitter Rejection / The Outcast's Hope

The True Audience

- There is a theme in Luke I love! A MAJOR NOTE: **outcast**
 - Orderly account of what's been fulfilled. Prophecies are true in Jesus
 - Jesus' launch of public ministry, epic. Reads the scroll of Isaiah in a synagogue:
 - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim **good news to the poor**. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (**Luke 4:18-19 ESV**)
 - Jesus sits down, and says: today, this prophecy is fulfilled.
 - This text is so helpful to unlocking Luke. It sets up the theme, because almost every single interaction Jesus has in the book of Luke revolves around four different types of people: (1) poor, (2) sick, (3) women, (4) Gentiles
 - Classism, ableism, sexism, racism
 - Outcasts. And it's the Gospel, the good news, for the outcasts, the misfits, the marginalized from society and culture. This is who Jesus pursues, runs after, and these are the people who love Jesus.
 - "...He who has ears to hear, let him **hear**." Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to **hear** him. And the Pharisees and the scribes **grumbled**, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable..." (**Luke 14:35-15:3 ESV**)
 - It's sometimes like a little easter egg to be told exactly why something is in the Bible, and we find it here. Jesus said: "listen". The outcasts are obeying Jesus. The Pharisees are grumbling, sullen, and angry at the welcome of Jesus to those who recognize their need for Him.
 - **Luke 15 is Jesus' response to the Pharisees' grumbling when He welcomes the outcasts.**
 - Once we understand the Pharisees are the real audience here, then it changes how we read Luke 15.
 - 3 stories: lost sheep, lost coin, lost son.
 - Most people preach how God pursues and runs after us: **THAT IS TRUE**
 - But the deeper point of the text is a bit more serious: **The response is an indictment against people who think they have it together: a warning.**
 - Pharisees are the audience
 - Not morality (*don't grumble but listen*). More than God pursues you (*but not less than that*). It's a warning meant to inspire us towards repentance, and joy, and embracing a faith for the outcasts.

The Joyful Pursuit

"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? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, **rejoicing**. 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.' 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.

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**? 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.' Just so, I tell you, there is **joy** before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:4-10 ESV)

- Why does God do this? What is the motivation of God for the outcasts?
 - **Joy** is what motivates God to pursue the outcasts, it's His **joy** to find us.
 - This is all about **Joy**. It's good news! God pursues the lost for His **joy** and our **joy!**
- Who is doing the pursuing here?
 - Does the sheep pursue the shepherd? Does the coin sprout legs and run after the woman? No!
 - God pursues. God initiates. This is the Gospel. **We don't earn God's pursuit by our repentance.** He is the first action, He runs after us, and then we respond to His pursuit with repentance. But to even have the eyes to see, like a lost sheep, we need to be shown the way. We need to be found.
 - This is in direct contradiction to the Pharisees, who say: It's my work of right-ness that earns me a seat at the table of God. I follow the rules. I do the right thing. And the people that don't, deserve what they get.
- How does this indict the Pharisees?
 - **The Pharisees' grumbling is the opposite of the joy produced by the Gospel and their work is the opposite of the rest provided by the Gospel.**
 - These are the class of people who studied God for centuries, they know all the rules, they made up rules for the rules, and they don't know God. They don't see Him when He is literally RIGHT in front of Him
- APPLICATION (#BadPastorMoment)
 - You can know the Bible, you can know theology, and it can blind you to Jesus. It's about your heart posture.
 - Rejecting joy at seeing marginalized outcasts cared for, rejects the heart of Jesus and the Gospel.
 - Any system of thought that says "I do the right thing, and the people that don't, deserve what they get" rejects the rest of the Gospel.

The Bitter Rejection

Tale of two sons

- The younger brother says I don't want you, I want your stuff. I wish you were dead. Give me my money.
- Wastes it, starves, comes to his senses, returns and tries to just be a day-laborer for his Dad
- His Dad runs to his son, gives a fresh robe, fresh sandals, and gives him the family signet ring, checkbook.
- That full restoration.

"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father **came out and entreated him**, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:25-32 ESV)

- What are they doing? What is their heart?
- What's the older son doing: grumbling.
 - Is there a better way to describe this? Sullen, someone else gets celebrated but I don't.
 - **JESUS IS SAYING THE OLDER SON IS THE PHARISEES!**
 - Angry, refused to go in. Refused to celebrate. Rejected joy.
- What is the father doing: finding his son
 - **The father did not pursue the younger son, he met him.**
 - But He is pursuing the older son, finding out, going out to Him. This means the older son is the one who is really lost (like the lost sheep and coin)
 - **Entreated = paraklete: HS, helper. HE'S TRYING TO HELP HIM!**

- The heart of the older son:
 - "I served you" - doulos - slave. I was your slave. I slaved away for you. And you never gave me anything.
 - Grumbling, complaining. The thing under the thing is bitterness.
 - It never was about His Father, it was about what His Father could give Him. **And when the older son doesn't get what he wants, He's angry when other people seem to get what they want. Rejects joy.**
- The heart of the Father
 - **You are always with me:** I have given you myself, yet you never saw that as a gift that you wanted
 - **All that is mine is yours:** You don't have any needs that I won't meet. I always give you what is best for you.
- How does this indict the Pharisees
 - They are bitter at God, not at the outcasts:
 - They aren't getting what they want: fame, recognition, political power, control, their version of justice over their oppressors
 - They don't really want God
 - There is no joy at the end of their story

The Outcast's Hope

You are not a slave. You are not a servant at God's table serving all of His kids.

You are a son. A daughter. A child. He loves you for you, not what you do for Him, but because He is drawn to your need.

- Seeing ourselves is seeing our neediness apart from Jesus.
 - Does not depend on your finances (classism)
 - Does not depend on your physique (ableism)
 - Does not depend on your social status (sexism)
 - Does not depend on your ethnicity or country of origin (racism)
 - You and I are the outcasts. We are the needy. And our culture blinds us to this need.
- And it is the very nature of our lostness that draws God to us. He is drawn to our need.
- When we see ourselves (lost) and we see God (pursuing us), that's where the **repentance** and **joy** comes in.
 - **"Repentance has nothing to do with what we have done. Rather, it is our coming undone in respect to all human righteousness followed by going outside ourselves in faith to Christ alone for salvation." - Jack Miller**
- That's when we can truly be a son, loved because of our Father, and loving others who get to be adopted into the family, no matter their background. Seeing Jesus meeting our needs, finding us in our lostness, generating spiritual life within us, allowing us to repent, turning us back to Him, and giving us His **joy**...that's the faith of an outcast.
- But you gotta be a outcast. You gotta see your need for any of this to make sense. And if you harden your heart to your need, the Gospel will actually repel you.

ADORATION

The party was ending, the wife pretty much said, you deal with him, I'm done. Broken man, repentant, gives his life to Jesus on my back porch. She completely rejects him. The marriage ended. Yet the husband remained faithful, following Jesus, in a men's group, little brother. Spent time with him. He is following Jesus. Showing grace. 180* from where he was.

What's the difference: grace soured her to the Gospel. She grumbled, bitter, rejected **joy**, how could it be that easy? He gets off scott free? Look at what I endured for years! I did the right stuff. I did my part. He was terrible. Now it just gets forgiven?

Yes. That's grace. That's the gospel. And when you see yourself as the outcast, that's what draws you to fall in more love with Jesus, who entered into the world to meet your deep need with His un-ending bottomless grace.

Let's leave here as outcasts. Willing to take the lowest place. Willing to see our need.