

Sermon Series: “Sharing the Good News—A Way of Life”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN – 1/4/2009

Title: “Why Spread the Good News?”

Text: Luke 15: 1-2,11-32

Intro.: *Illus.: Good News/Bad News*

Theme: We must believe that God has given us the most wonderful news of freedom in Jesus before we are convinced that someone else in desperate straights really needs for you and me to share that good news with them.

Our religious disconnect with “good-newsing” (evangelism) (Luke 15: 1-2)

- What keeps us from sharing the good news is also what keeps us from receiving the good news
- 1. The religious legalists of Jesus’ day grumbled at Jesus dealing with the “degenerates”
 - a. Outcasts (tax collectors connected to pagan Romans) and “sinners” (prostitutes committing scarlet letter sin)
 - b. They could not conceive of receiving/welcoming sinners home without condoning their sin
 - c. They did not see that their very judgment coated them with sin’s slime (*You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. Romans 2:23-24*)
- 2. A judgmental attitude toward others’ sins will always block you from sharing and receiving the good news
 - a. *Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! James 2:13*
- Grace can never be earned—it must be given and received
- 1. Jesus’ parable paints the story of two sons and a father to teach us the grand truth of grace
 - a. A son selfishly demanding a gift as if owed to him and believing he couldn’t come back because of sin too great
 - b. A son self-righteously pouting over lavish grace to a fallen child and excluding himself from an inclusive invite
 - c. A inconceivably loving father allowed love to birth mercy and without second thought gave undeserved love
- 2. What has the Father forgiven you? (hidden adulterous affair, an aborted child, a contemptuous heart, a guilt driven work ethic that is killing others, a slothful life which is wasting away God’s gifting, an anger abusive parenting)
- 3. *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:12-13*

Who needs to hear the Good News? (vs 11)

- The “lost” (12-20a)
- 1. Younger son was so lost he was ready to “settle” for pig fodder but could not even get it
- The “secure” (25-30)
- 1. Older son was so crusted over to grace that he did not even recognize it when it bit him in the nose all those years
- Which one are you?
- 1. If you are understanding, for the first time, your sin is not so great, you are not so lost, that the Father can’t forgive you---**TODAY** is the day for you to respond to God’s good news for you in Jesus Christ
- 2. If you are clinging to self-righteousness of hollow comfort, **TODAY**, the Father seeks you out and asks you to surrender to the flood of his grace to heal your “angry heart”
- 3. **Illus: Undeserved**

Adopting the Father’s heart about sharing the Good News

- Seeking out rather than waiting for the lost one (vs. 20b)
- 1. *"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10*
- Releasing rather than conditioning love (vs. 22)
- 1. *Freely you received, freely give. Matthew 10:8*
- § Focusing on what is right and true rather than what was wrong (vs. 24)
- 1. *Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Philippians 4:8*
- Willing to share patient love (vs. 31)
- 1. Imagine Father’s pained heart as he listened to an ungrateful son—yet, one whom he loved enough to keep loving
- 2. Loving someone else into God’s Kingdom is hard work — the heart of what the Good News story is all about
- 3. *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3: 16*
- Anticipating heaven’s perspective when the lost is found (vs. 32)
- 1. **Ills.: Enough noise to lift the roof off (Colts 2006 Superbowl celebration)**
- 2. *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: 7*

Good News/Bad News

A farmer went into his banker and announced that he had bad news and good news. "First, the bad news..." "Well," said the farmer, "I can't make my mortgage payments. And that crop loan I've taken out for the past 10 years -- I can't pay that off, either. Not only that, I won't be able to pay you the couple of hundred thousand I still have outstanding on my tractors and other equipment. So I'm going to have to give up the farm and turn it all over to you for whatever you can salvage out of it." Silence prevailed for a minute and then the banker said, "What's the good news?" "The good news is that I'm going to keep on banking with you," said the farmer. *Bits & Pieces, April 30, 1992.*

Undeserved

When Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, he was stopped by a policeman and charged with speeding. Graham admitted his guilt, but was told by the officer that he would have to appear in court. The judge asked, "Guilty, or not guilty?" When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, "That'll be ten dollars -- a dollar for every mile you went over the limit." Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. "You have violated the law," he said. "The fine must be paid--but I am going to pay it for you." He took a ten dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner! "That," said Billy Graham, "is how God treats repentant sinners!" *Progress Magazine, December 14, 1992*

Luke 15:1-2

[1] Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. [2] But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Luke 15:11-32

[11] Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.

[12] The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. [13] "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. [14] After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. [15] So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. [16] He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. [17] "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! [18] I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. [19] I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' [20] So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

[21] "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

[22] "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. [23] Bring the fattened calf and sacrifice it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. [24] For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

[25] "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. [26] So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. [27] 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' [28] "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. [29] But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. [30] But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

[31] " 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

[32] But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' "