

## God's Joy • Luke 15:1-10

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. RR - 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

**14** Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.

**15** For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

**16** To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who *is* sufficient for these things?

#### B. Absorbing the Scent

1. Though we had a washer & dryer in my home growing up, for some reason, my mother would often hang the clothes out to dry in the sunlight & fresh air.
2. We moved quite a lot when I was a young-un, and I remember one of the very first things my mother always did when settling into a new house was to put up a clothes line in the backyard – it was like a religious ritual.
3. It wasn't till I was in my early teens that I understood why.
  - a. I finally asked her one day why she hung the clothes out when we had a dryer.
  - b. She said the clothes just *smelled* better.
  - c. The sunlight & fresh air combined to give them a fresh, clean fragrance of the outdoors.
4. She was right; and I began to notice the difference between clothes that had been dried in the dryer and those that had been dried on the clothesline.

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5. It's not so true anymore because of the recent prohibitions against smoking, but it used to be that if you spent an hour in a bowling alley or nightclub, you came out smelling like what? Cigarette smoke.
6. If you worked the kitchen at In-N-Out for 6 hours, you'd go home smelling of grease, potatoes, & condiments.
7. If you spent all day picking strawberries, you'd smell like them.

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8. It's inevitable – we pick up the scent, the fragrance of our

environment.

- a. And what's true of the *physical* atmosphere is true of our where we live spiritually.
- b. Just as we each carry our own unique *physical* scent, we also give off a *spiritual* aroma.

### **C. The Fragrance of Christ**

1. That's what Paul is saying here in 2 Cor. 2.
  - a. As Christians, we exude a spiritual fragrance,
  - b. One that moves those around us to some reaction.
2. Last week, Jon Courson was here and blessed us with his amazing gift of teaching & encouragement.
  - a. Jon is one of those who gives off a strong, sweet fragrance of Jesus.
  - b. He's spends much time just being with the Lord,
  - c. And that time, spent in the environment of Christ, has *saturated* Jon's whole being –
  - d. So that where ever he goes, people are moved to think about God.
3. That's what Paul says will happen with us in vs. 15 & 16.
4. But people will respond one of two ways to the fragrance of Christ we bring –
  - a. The saved will *rejoice* at our aroma, while the lost will *recoil*.
  - b. To the born-again, other Christians are a sweet fragrance,
  - c. But to those determined to perish, we reek with a noxious odor.
5. Strange isn't it, how two people can find the same scent to be so very different.
  - a. If that were not true, there would be only one cologne & perfume.
  - b. It would certainly make shopping easier.
  - c. But there are whole stores dedicated to selling scents to people with widely ranging tastes.
  - d. One guy like *Hugo Boss*, another likes *Dakkar Noir*.
  - e. One woman likes *White Shoulders*, another prefers *Obsession*.
  - f. I like incense, but can't burn it at our house because my wife hates it; it gives her a headache.
6. We all have different tastes when it comes to smell.
7. And scientists have discovered that our sense of smell is closely tied to both *memory & emotions*.

- a. A smell can instantly take us back to something in our past,
  - b. And stir up an emotion before we have a chance to think about it.
8. I love Cinabon because it reminds me of the cinnamon rolls my Mom made.

#### **D. Appeal**

1. Knowing that smell is linked to emotions, the perfume industry has invested millions of dollars in research, trying to find new scents that will appeal to consumers.
  2. The research departments of the perfume industry are some of the most highly graded facilities in the world, rivaling the defense industry of major nations.
  3. Each year, people spend over \$15 billion on perfume & cologne!  
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  4. Obviously, the desire to smell good is a powerful incentive for many people.
  5. Not all, but *most* of us probably took a shower this morning and put on clean clothes because we knew we'd be sitting here with a bunch of other people around us and we didn't want to reek.
  6. A good number of us probably used some deodorant & sprayed or slapped on some foo-foo juice as well.
  7. We want to smell nice! I doubt anyone **WANTS** to smell groughdy, causing the people around them to recoil in horror at the noxious fumes rising from them.
  8. How else can we explain the fact that over \$15 billion is spent every year on perfume?
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9. As strong as the appeal to *smell* nice ought to be the desire and effort to give off an attractive *spiritual* fragrance.
  10. The problem is, spiritual scent isn't sold in a bottle.
    - a. There's no store that sells the fragrance of Christ.
    - b. It comes only one way – by spending time in His presence.
    - c. Just as we pick up the scent of the atmosphere we spend time in,
    - d. We pick up the aroma of Jesus by spending time in the environment of intimate fellowship with Him.
  11. Our text today tells us how we *enter that place*, how we gain access to the presence of Christ.

## II. TEXT

### A. *The Lost Sheep* • Luke 15:1-7

**<sup>1</sup>Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”**

1. This is late in Jesus’ ministry. It won’t be much longer till He’s arrested & executed.
2. His opponents have settled on a course of stiff resistance to Him, trying to find something with which to condemn Him.
3. Those opponents were compromised mostly of the religious experts, men known as scribes & Pharisees, guys who had great pride in a careful observance of their interpretations of the Law of Moses.
4. They utterly abhorred the mass of common folk, and most especially those who lived on the fringe of society – like tax collectors & their low-life friends.
5. Jesus was considered a rabbi, one of the elite of Jewish religion.
6. So when the Pharisees & scribes saw Him hanging out with and even *welcoming* such riff-raff, they made their criticism loud & clear.
7. Jesus replied -

**<sup>3</sup>So He spoke this parable to them, saying: <sup>4</sup>“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. <sup>6</sup>And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’**

8. A shepherd’s task is to lead, feed, and protect his flock.
  - a. He counts them several times throughout the day to make sure none are missing.
  - b. If he discovers that one is gone, he puts the rest into a sheepfold, then goes out in search of the lost.
  - c. He knows that a single lost sheep is easy pickings for a hungry predator,

- d. And that sheep are so dumb they'll easily get themselves into a life-threatening predicament.
  - e. Safety for the sheep lies in only one place – the flock as it follows the shepherd.
  - f. So he sets out to find that sheep before it's too late.
9. When he finds it, he rejoices because he really *cares* about that sheep.
- a. The sheep aren't just his *job*; they aren't just *things* to him. They're special.
  - b. He knows each one by name.
10. So when he finds the lost one, he rejoices, and he shares his joy with those around him, expecting that they'll rejoice *with* him.
11. Take careful note of that – The shepherd wants *others to share* in his joy at the recovery of the lost sheep.
12. Jesus then gives the lesson, the point of the parable -
- 7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.**
13. Jesus wanted the Pharisees to realize *their outrage* at His welcome of sinners was wrong.
- a. They ought to have been *celebrating* the fact that the lost were turning to God.
  - b. After all, heaven was rejoicing!
14. The Pharisees & scribes believed God & the angels were *proud* of them because they were so diligent to keep the Law.
- a. They pictured God *bragging* on them as He had on Job.
  - b. And while God's *smile* rested on them, His face *clouded over* when He looked at the tax-collectors & their friends.
  - c. They thought He stood poised with lightening bolts of stormy judgment, just ready to strike them.
15. Jesus tells them they don't have things quite right.
- a. God isn't an Angry Judge itching to condemn –
  - b. He's a concerned Shepherd searching for the Lost.
  - c. And when He finds them, His hands do not hurl lightening bolts, they embrace, lift up, & restore.
  - d. Then He rejoices! His joy is greater in the saving of the lost than in all the rest.
16. Now, Jesus is **NOT** saying that the Pharisees & scribes had no

need to repent.

- a. They were every bit as lost as the tax-collectors & sinners.
- b. Jesus is simply calling them to realize that their *attitude* toward those who are lost is all wrong.
- c. Instead of being all judgmental toward sinners, they ought to have been concerned for their eternal destiny.
- d. When they saw them coming to Jesus, to hear & be *changed* by Him, they ought to have rejoiced that the Flock of God was being enlarged.

17. Hang on to that thought; we'll come back to it in a moment.

### **B. The Lost Coin • Luke 15:8-10**

1. Jesus follows up the parable of the lost sheep with another one -  
**8“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’**
2. This story might seem a bit strange to us – after all, if we lose a dime, we don't go to all this effort to find it or call everyone together for a party when it's found.
3. It helps to realize that the coin is a drachma & equaled more than an entire day's wage.
  - a. This was no paltry sum; it was a thing of real worth.
  - b. But even then, not enough to warrant calling everyone together for a celebration.
4. By speaking of *10 silver coins*, Jesus was referring to the headdress worn by Jewish married women.
  - a. They wore a head-band of 10 coins, bound by a silver chain.
  - b. It was a mark of their covenant & spoke of their worth to their husband.
  - c. The reason this woman was so frantic to recover the lost coin was because it belonged to this unique sign of her position.
  - d. The value of the coin went well beyond its monetary value – it had strong *sentimental* value.
  - e. Imagine how devastating it would be to lose the diamond in your wedding ring, and what a joy & relief it would be when you found it again and you get an idea of what's going on here.

5. Then Jesus applies the lesson -

**10 Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

### **C. God's Joy**

1. According to these two parables – what brings *joy to heaven*?
  2. What causes God & His angels to rejoice? *When sinners repent.*
  3. It's important we meditate on that for a bit.
  4. God *digs* repentance!
    - a. When a sinner repents, God gets excited, if I can use a human term.
    - b. What brings a huge smile to the face of angels is when a sinner turns from his/her sin.
    - c. Celebration, joy, merry-making – that's what happens in heaven when someone who's lost turns to Christ.
  5. Now – Jesus' **POINT** here is that **SINCE** this is what the response of heaven is to the repentance of sinners – it ought to be the response of God's people on Earth.
    - a. The shepherd called his friends to rejoice *with him* at the recovery of the lost sheep.
    - b. The woman called her family & neighbors to rejoice *with her* in the recovery of the lost coin.
    - c. We who already know Jesus ought to break out in great rejoicing when the lost turn to Jesus!
  6. But even *before* that – we ought to be **EAGER** for their repentance; just as the shepherd and the woman were so diligent and eager to go after that which was lost.
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7. Tell me something Christian – do you *long* to see the lost turn to Jesus?
    - a. Are you *eager* and *excited* to see this church overflowing with sinners who are repenting?
    - b. Really? Would you love to see gang-bangers taking up the seats in front of, behind, and around you?
    - c. Would you rejoice to see Goths packing whole rows?
    - d. What about Middle-Easterners? Illegal immigrants?
    - e. Let me shift gears – Would you love to see & get excited by the seats around you packed with rich whities?
    - f. Would you joyously join hands in prayer with some punked-out

- surfer?
8. I don't believe God will loose full-scale revival on us until we not only *rejoice* at the repentance of sinners, but we come to a place of out-right *eagerness* for it;
  9. Really there has to be a sense of *desperation* for it –
    - a. Just as the shepherd was *desperate* to find that lost sheep.
    - b. Just as the woman was *desperate* to find that lost coin.
  10. You see, that's the point Jesus wanted the Pharisees to understand: God doesn't just sit passively by and *wait* for sinners to repent.
  11. His Spirit has gone out into all the Earth, searching for the lost – calling to them to come home.

#### **D. Is It Safe?**

1. There was a movie some years ago, *The Marathon Man*, in which the main character was captured and tortured by the villain who kept grilling him with a single question, "Is it safe?"
2. In light of what Jesus says here about repentance, and how eager and joyous God is over it – you & I have to ask a very important question this morning.

#### **IS IT SAFE?**

3. What I mean is – is this a *place* where repentance is *welcome*?
  - a. Is this a safe place where people can repent without the fear that they'll be rejected and shamed just because they were *honest*?
  - b. When someone repents – does heaven rejoice or reject?
  - c. "Lord, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth, at CCO as it is in heaven!"
4. As a church, we must strive to be a place where repentance isn't rare & infrequent, but where it's common & expected.
5. When a man or woman repents, our response ought not be shock, embarrassment, shame, gossip, or scorn.
6. It ought to be a joyous celebration that God's Spirit has convicted that person, and His forgiveness & victory has now been extended over one more stronghold of the devil.

#### **E. Repentance The Way Back**

1. To repent, means to turn around and go the other direction.
2. Repentance is the decision to turn from sin to God, and not just



*make the turn*, but to move in the right direction.

3. In the OT, the most consistent message of the Prophets was, “Repent!”
4. Over & over God said to *His people Israel* – “Return to me, and I will return to you!”
5. After these 2 stories, the lost sheep and lost coin, Jesus tells a longer story about a *lost son*.
  - a. Almost everyone here this morning has heard that story *many* times.
  - b. It’s often called the *Story of the Prodigal Son* – thought that’s an unfortunate title.
  - c. Prodigal means *wasteful*, and he’s called a *prodigal* son because he wasted his life.
  - d. He wasn’t a prodigal so much as he was *lost*.
  - e. And Jesus told the story, not with a focus on the lost son who returned, but to contrast the forgiving father’s attitude with the *rotten attitude* of the older brother.
  - f. Jesus wanted to rebuke the Pharisees for their dislike & resistance of the sinners who were coming to Christ.
  - g. These men did not at all have the heart of the God.
  - h. On the contrary, what did the father do when he saw his lost son had turned around – he took off running down the road to embrace him and cover him in the signs of forgiveness and renewal to sonship.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. *The Need To Repent*

1. Oh that today, you & I would realize just how earnest, how eager God is for *our* repentance.
2. For sinner and saint alike – we *all need* to repent – each and every one!
3. The prophets of old went to *God’s covenant people Israel* with the call to repent:

“Return to Me and I will return to you!”
4. In the story here in ch. 15, the lost one was *still his father’s son*.
5. It was repentance that brought him back into the father’s embrace.
6. Christian, listen – the fragrance of Christ is bestowed on us by only one thing, spending *time* in His presence.

7. But His presence is entered *only one way* –
  - a. By repentance & faith,
  - b. By turning from our way to His, from self to God.
8. If we would experience what God intends His people, His church to be, then repentance must become as routine among us as worship.
9. How can we enter the Lord's presence in worship unless we repent?
10. I want those around me to be moved to think of heaven because of the influence of my life.
  - a. When I walk into a room, I want the fragrance of Jesus to fill their hearts.
  - b. I want the scent that comes from me to be spiritually *sweet*, something that brings joy to others and moves them to consider the beauty & glory of God.
11. The spray on that spiritual cologne bottle is pressed by my repentance.

## **B. The Lost**

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[1] <http://www.isdesignet.com/Magazine/2004/mar/edit.html> Interiors & Sources, "People for the Planet" May 27, 2005