

“...Reaching Tens of Thousands...”

Luke 15 * October 14, 2007

“OUR DREAM IS TO JOYFULLY BECOME A GROWING CHRISTIAN CHURCH THAT REACHES TENS OF THOUSANDS, TEACHES THOUSANDS, UNLEASHES HUNDREDS, IN NEW ENGLAND AND BEYOND.”

I. What was Jesus’ stated mission is coming to earth?

Luke 19:10 – “I have come to seek and to save what was lost.”

How did he show that this was his mission?

He showed it first and foremost in going to the cross, for this is why he died – to bring people lost in sin and lost without God back into a relationship with their Heavenly Father. He showed it in the way he trained his disciples during the 3 years of his public ministry. When he first met Peter and his brother Andrew, Jesus said to them, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matthew 4:19). And during those 3 years, he dedicated himself to preparing them to be his ambassadors to a lost world once he returned to heaven. He showed it in his teaching. He told parable after parable about the importance of reaching lost people.

II. The Past Week:

Yes No

- Did I intentionally reach out to any lost people? ___ ___
- Did I hang out with any lost people? ___ ___
- Did I strike up any spiritual conversations? ___ ___
- Did I invite anyone to church this past week? ___ ___
- Did I pray by name for any lost ones to be saved? ___ ___

III. What Example Did Jesus Set For Us To Follow?

First, Jesus loved and accepted lost people.

A. What bugged the Pharisees about Jesus?

That he spent time with broken, sinful people. They began to circulate a slanderous saying about Jesus: “Here is a glutton and a drunkard; a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”

B. What must the Pharisees have believed about lost people?

They’ll contaminate you. They’re unclean. They’ll infect you. They’ll jeopardize your own salvation. They’re not one of us. They deserve God’s judgment. We’re better than they are. God loves us more.

C. In contrast, what must Jesus have believed about them?

They too are loved by God. Their lives have value. What sin has ruined, God can repair. I can love and accept sinful people without giving in to sin, without compromising what I believe about sin. They’re like sheep without a shepherd. They need to be loved, accepted and taught.

JESUS BELIEVED THE BEST WAY TO HELP A LOST PERSON RECEIVE THE GOSPEL WAS TO FIRST ESTABLISH A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM OR HER THAT WAS BUILT ON LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE.

D. What should Grace do as a church to follow Jesus here?

1. We should develop habits of hospitality.

a. What are some tangible ways to do this?

Warmly greet our guests. See that they have parking, and can find their way around our strangely laid-out building.

2. We could cultivate habits of humility.

Titus 3:2-3 – “Slander no one,...be peaceable and considerate, ...show true humility to all men. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures.”

a. According to this verse, what are some ‘habits of humility’?

Three things here which Paul says how humility – “Slander no one,” Paul writes. Don’t badmouth lost people. I think we actually need to retrain our minds in this area. Call it a form of sensitivity training. The world has a version of sensitivity training where they try to get you to look at someone living an immoral

lifestyle and to stop calling it immoral or thinking it's bad. God's version of sensitivity training would be to try to get you to look at someone lost in sin – and not change your definition of sin – but change the way you see that person. Train yourself so that your first response in seeing them is not negative and judgmental, but filled with mercy, pity, grace. Train yourself to see past their sin to see the image of God in them, see the possibility for redemption in them, see the reasons why they might be lost in sin, reasons they might not even see themselves. How else could Jesus have looked down from the cross at the ones who had crucified him, and the ones who were mocking him, and were gambling for his clothes and still say, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

Secondly, Paul says to Titus be *peaceable*. Fight for Jesus, but don't start a fight for Jesus. 2 Timothy 2:24-25 – "The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone...Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance."

Thirdly, Paul says to Titus be *considerate*. And the Greek word here has to do with being patient, forbearing, gentle. Why do you have to be patient with lost people and put up with their lostness? Well just look at your own life, Paul says. Paul writes: "At one time we were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures." And was God patient with us? Did he forgive us over and over again? Did he reach out to us over and over again?

Second, Jesus met people where they at.

A. In Luke 15, how do we see Jesus doing this? In the simple fact that he's telling a *parable*, a simple story from everyday life that would be easy to understand.

B. In doing this, Jesus separates out two things: the Gospel (which cannot change) and the packaging of the Gospel (which will change).

C. How did the apostle Paul do this?

In Paul's day there was a Jewish container. And when Paul preached the gospel to a Jew he would use the Old Testament, he would talk about Moses and the Law. When he talked to a Gentile though, he would preach the Gospel using another container. Preaching in Athens, Paul once began a sermon by quoting a Greek poet rather than the Old Testament. If saving lost people is our goal, then we will meet lost people where they are at.

D. In what ways has Grace done this over the years?

This church made that commitment 12 years ago when you brought here a young-buck pastor from Minnesota to shake things up. We made that commitment once again when we took a culturally difficult step of renovating our sanctuary to better suit the needs and styles of a new generation. You made that commitment yet again when you allowed your understanding of worship to grow and expand and adapt to the musical tastes of younger generations, and why? So we could follow in our Lord's footsteps of reaching out to lost people. And during those first five or six years here at Grace, more than 150 new people came into our fellowship, many of them brand new baby Christians.

E. Is God finished with what he wants to do through Grace? If not, how can I make a difference in helping "reach tens of thousands"?

3. Why would be some wrong reasons for wanting to grow outwardly large in numbers?