

Drawn to Jesus (Luke 15:1-32)

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WATCH/LISTEN: www.fbcjc.org/sermon/drawn-to-jesus/

Today we begin a 4-week series we're calling "Drawn to Jesus." It's directly related to the final part of our church's mission statement: "...leading people into LIFE-GIVING relationships with Christ and each other." Each week we will look at a different passage from the Gospel of Luke to see how Jesus interacted with different people from different walks of life, and we'll think about some of the things that drew people to Jesus... that led them to follow him.

In Luke 15, Jesus tells three different stories – but there are some intentional, important themes that exist in all three stories. There were times when Jesus would repeat themes twice, but this is a very rare instance when Jesus repeated his point three times. So we know that Jesus was really trying to drive home something that was very important – important to him, and something that should be important to us.

The first two stories were read earlier in the service. The first was about a sheep owner and a wandering sheep. The second story was about a woman and her missing coin. The third story is one that doesn't focus on losing a "thing," but on losing a "person." As I read this passage, think with me about the similarities that exist in all three stories.

Luke 15:11-31

11 Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." '

20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and

kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' 31 Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

As we reflect on these stories together, I'm going to ask for you to help me out. There are some definite similarities in these stories. What is one similarity that stood out to you?

Similarities in these three stories:

1. Something valuable was lost – a sheep, a coin, a loved one.
2. The person who lost something longed for it be found.
3. There was great celebration when the thing that was valued was found!

But there are also some things in these stories that differ from one story to the next. What did you notice that is different?

- There is a progression... from 100 sheep, to only 10 coins, to two sons – one lost son.
- In the story of the lost son, unlike the first two stories, the father doesn't actively go after his son and force himself on him. Rather, the father was waiting and watching, but the choice to be found was solely determined by the will of the lost son. Did you notice the turning point that took place in verse 17?
 - Verse 17: "when he came to himself" is the literal translation, but other translations state "when he came to his senses" or "when he realized what he had been doing"

The important lesson is that the lost son wasn't where he was supposed to be in the grand scheme of things – he wasn't where he was supposed to be physically, and he wasn't where he was supposed to be spiritually. And because he was out of place and out of sorts – living only how he wanted to live and trying to find happiness in all the wrong places – he wasn't "himself." It was only when he humbly realized his need to repent and return to his father who loved him no matter what, that he truly "came to himself" and lived the life that God created him to live.

- Only in the story of the Lost Son is there a character who isn't happy and doesn't want to celebrate... the older brother (who considered himself to be righteous and who didn't need to repent) who hesitates to share grace with even his younger brother.

So, as you think about these three stories that Jesus told, what does it look like to be "Drawn to Jesus?"

1. Realize that you're valuable to God. Or maybe the starting point is when we feel like we're not valuable at all, just like the lost son in the story who was chasing what he thought would bring him happiness and fulfillment, but eventually found it to be empty and pointless.
2. Realize God yearns to know you and be known by you.
3. Realize that it's ultimately up to you... that going to and following Jesus is better than doing it on your own, your own way.
4. For those of us who are already following Jesus, realize that there is reason to celebrate, instead of making it a time to nitpick & judge.