**“Let’s Party”**

Luke 15

* We are finishing up our series on the purpose of the church
* I hope that we have made it clear that the purpose of the church is to Make Disciples
* In addition to Making Disciples we've talked about how we are going to be willing to do Whatever It Takes to accomplish this
* The past two weeks we have talked about spiritual warfare and how we are to prepare for battle and last week we specifically identified our enemy
* I told you a few weeks back that we are going to celebrate here at Ebenezer, I'm always looking for a reason to get excited!
* This week we are going to take a look at three stories in Luke chapter 15 and discover what they can tell us on how and what we are to celebrate

Luke 15:1-7 1Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. 2And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

3So he told them this parable: 4“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? 5And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6And 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.’ 7Just 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.

* Lost Sheep
  + Left 99 to find the one
  + found the one= Party, happy!
  + My crazy bird dog that was lost for two weeks
* Lesson Learned
  + One is worth it
    - Abraham- Sodom and Gomorrah, End of Genesis 18, After the angels had visited him and told him they were going to destroy the cities, Conversation with the Lord-destroy for the sake of 50?, 45?, 30?, 20?, 10?- "I will not destroy it for sake of 10"- Lord.
  + God rejoices, heaven over one sinner who repents
  + Doesn't mean the 99 aren't valuable, just cause for more celebration because of one person avoiding hell

Luke 15:8-10 8 “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? 9And 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.’ 10Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

* Lost Coin
  + Significant Wealth
    - 1/10 of her wealth
    - $5,000 is 1/10 of $50,000
  + Everything on hold to look for it
  + What if one of us lost $5,000
  + Found=Party, can't wait to tell someone, happy!
* Lesson learned
  + One is valuable, significant worth
  + Goes back to our One til everyone
  + One sinner repents= God rejoices

Luke 15:11-32 11And he said, “There was a man who had two sons.12And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. 13Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’20And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’22But the father said to his servants,‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

25 “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.26And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27And 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.’ 28But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29but 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. 30But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ 31And he said to him, ‘Son,you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”

* Jesus goes deeper in this third story
  + Religious rulers accuse him of receiving sinners, God forbid
  + Jesus tries to reason with them a little
  + 1st=sheep
    - Leave the 99 to find the one
    - It's a business commodity=Makes sense
  + 2nd= money
    - Stop everything to find
    - It's significant wealth=makes sense
* Lost Son
  + Destructive choices
    - Asked for it
    - Squandered away his inheritance
    - brought misery upon himself
  + Father
    - put life on hold
    - always looking to the horizon
    - I imagine the father always hoping and watching for his lost son as he went about his life
  + Found=Celebrate/party
    - Son comes back
    - Father overjoyed
    - Father doesn't care about the past
    - Kills the fatted calf, we're having a party
    - Happy ending, right?. . . . .but wait
  + Different in this story
    - Other stories no one questioned the celebration
    - No problem celebrating business success/financial gain
    - Someone had a problem with the father extending forgiveness
    - Elder Son=pity party
    - Elder Son had experienced the joy, peace, security, fulfillment of the father
    - Couldn't believe that the father would do that
    - Elder son valued himself over his brother= The insider, no outsider
      * Self-righteous=Me
      * Always made good choices
  + Lesson learned
    - I have said "They have made their bed, now they have to lie in it"
    - Can't value only the insiders or ourselves
      * Jesus doesn't expect someone to clean their life up and then come, they get to come directly after lying directly with pigs in the sty
      * Jesus said the first shall become the last and the greatest shall become the least
    - Jesus completely reordered his life, left heaven Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”
      * Jesus came for the lost not the found
    - The church
      * Jesus talking to the religious leaders (The Church)
      * Problem with Jesus hanging out with sinners in v.2
      * They had a problem with Jesus putting more value on the least and the lost
      * Had a problem with Jesus not spending time with them=the insiders
    - The wayward son
      * Wasn't just that the he showed up and said "I'm back"
        + "Kill the fatted calf, let's party!"
        + Not that he did what Paul warned the Romans about in chapter 6:1 “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?”
      * Repented, shows remorse
        + I made a mistake
        + Willing to admit it to his father
      * Willing to accept the consequences
        + No longer able to be called your son
        + I will live as your servant
        + Like David in Psalms 51

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

1. The Church
   1. Healing  
      1. Forgiveness/ Judgement
      2. We all struggle with this
         1. Must see past others mistakes
         2. Cant value us over them, there is no us/them it's we!
      3. The Church has alienated some unknowingly and knowingly
         1. Casualties that we talked about last week
            1. Sometimes the enemy
            2. Sometimes "friendly fire"-we have done it to each other
         2. Inflicted our own wounds
      4. Willing to extend forgiveness and be willing to accept forgiveness
         1. Going to get hurt and going to give hurt-cannot escape it, it's a battle everyday and it's an ongoing war
         2. Get hurt=be willing to forgive
         3. Give hurt=ask for forgiveness
            1. Jesus if your giving your gift and remember you sinned against your brother-leave it and go ask for forgiveness
   2. Making Disciples
      1. Seek and save the lost?
         1. Can't only value the insiders
         2. Rick Warren, pastor Saddleback Church in CA and author of Purpose driven Life, sometimes the motto of the Church is "serve us instead of service"
      2. Early Church organization- Acts
         1. Large gatherings in public square=crowd drawn, gospel preached, thousands saved
            1. Evangelism
            2. Outreach
            3. Missions
         2. Small groups in homes for deep worship/teaching
         3. Sometimes we have gotten that backwards
            1. Get together in a large group-communicate in a way in which only the insiders can understand-go deep to try to disciple
            2. "Equipping the disciples/workers to harvest"
      3. Celebrate  
         1. Charge conference connection group
            1. Brian Brannon= "All but one church celebrated things other than professions of faith"

Not have them?

If yes, should be the most important thing!

God rejoices, all heaven rejoices over ONE!

* + - 1. Keep the main thing the main thing= Making Disciples

1. Ebenezer
   1. Healing  
      1. Hurts
         1. Received and Given
      2. Judgement
         1. Repent ask for forgiveness and ask God for another chance
      3. Wrongs
         1. Jesus-go to brother immediately and ask for forgiveness
   2. Making Disciples/ What are we doing to seek and save lost
      1. Follow Jesus
      2. Many things already doing
         1. Food Bank, Children's Ministry, Potter's House, Children's Home, Bill and Angela=parsonage, women few weeks ago
      3. What value the most
         1. Time and Money?
         2. Traditions, Things we have always done?
         3. Least, last, lost
      4. What are we doing to seek and save lost
         1. They/you are worth it
         2. Do what Jesus did, leave our comfort zones
         3. Christine Caine
   3. Church organization-Four Areas we will focus on
      1. Worship
         1. Gather as many as we can-"how can we get more people here."
         2. Gospel preached- Jesus as Savior nothing more nothing less
      2. Children's ministry
         1. Pour into our kids
         2. The future
         3. Strong foundation so when the time is right they will give their life to Christ
      3. Small Groups
         1. Focus on us while accepting all in
         2. Grow in fellowship
         3. Focus on maturing in faith
         4. So we can follow Jesus better
      4. Outreach
         1. Go into the community and love on people
         2. Do what we are already doing and improve it
            1. One thing a month
            2. Food bank, potter's house, outreach with parsonage
            3. Doing so many wonderful things what is one thing we can do to improve each
   4. Celebrate
      1. Professions of faith
      2. Restoration of Relationships/Healing/Forgiveness
      3. Growing in Maturity
      4. Miracles/Signs/Visions
         1. Number=150
2. Individuals
   1. Healing
      1. What have we been hurt by and how can we extend forgiveness
      2. Who have we hurt and need to ask forgiveness from
         1. Personal example-Coach Beaver
   2. Making Disciples/ what am I doing to seek and save los
      1. What are we doing to seek and save lost
      2. They are worth it
      3. You are worth it!
      4. Have to do Jesus  did,
         1. Luke 19 above, left heaven- to seek and save lost
         2. Leave our comfort zones
         3. Christine Caine, pastor and founder of A21=human trafficking- "pray for a miracle, vision, or sign but refuse to place ourselves in a position where we need one"
   3. What value most
      1. Time and money= Test, what are you spending your time and money on?
      2. Investing in Seeking the Lost/Making Disciples?
      3. God, all of heaven rejoices over one lost person; more than anything else!
   4. Celebrate  
      1. Giving life to Christ= God and all heaven rejoices
      2. Healing of hurts, given and received forgiveness
      3. Miracles, visions and signs as we put ourselves in positions to get one
         1. 150= The number the Lord gave me!!!

* Closing
  + Communion
  + As the body of Christ= the church
  + Take communion
    - Focus on 2 things
      * Forgiveness "who do I need to forgive and who do I need to seek forgiveness from?"
      * How can we/I seek and save the lost, Making disciples one at a time?