



THURSDAY 08.12.10

Luke 15:1-7

The setting which is described in the first two verses of Luke 15 sets the scene for the telling of three of Jesus' most well known parables — the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost boy, also known as the prodigal son. Each of these stories focus on something that has been lost and the joy that is experienced when what had been lost is found.

- Verse 3 says, "Jesus told them this parable" but does not clearly identify whether the "them" is the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, the tax collectors and sinners who are sharing this meal with Jesus or both groups. What might Jesus be trying to communicate to the Pharisees in this parable? What might he be trying to communicate to the tax collectors and sinners?
- What do these stories tell us about how God feels about things that are lost?

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FRIDAY 08.13.10

John 8:1-11

This awful scene is a reminder to us of just how great a threat the teachers and the Pharisees perceived Jesus to be. Their interaction had moved beyond a heated debate. The Pharisees were set on destroying Jesus. Because of their actions, an adulterous women had to stand between these men and Jesus awaiting to hear what her fate would be.

- While Jesus does not deny the magnitude of this woman's sin or the punishment that the Pharisees had prescribed for her, he does address the question of who can stand in judgement of her. Jesus says "if anyone is without sin," they may throw a stone. Jesus is the only one who fits that qualification, and yet, he offers mercy. How do you think Jesus felt about this woman who stood in judgement before him?
- What does this tell you about how Jesus feels about you?

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# GROW • PRAY • STUDY

A RESOURCE FOR DISCIPLES SEEKING TO LOVE GOD, LOVE OTHERS & SERVE THE WORLD ...

**Series:** *Why People Leave Church*  
**Sermon:** *Christians are Judgmental and Hypocritical*  
**Scripture:** Romans 12:3-8

**"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:8-10)**

20 years ago the most known verse in the Bible was John 3:16.

**"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

Today, the most known verse in the Bible is Matthew 7:1.

" \_\_\_\_\_ "

1. The unchurched world does not dictate the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ of the Christian, \_\_\_\_\_ does!
2. The Christian has an obligation to \_\_\_\_\_!
3. The Christian's major task is to \_\_\_\_\_!
4. Our \_\_\_\_\_ is a prescription that heals the \_\_\_\_\_!

A recent George Barna survey asking non-Christians their impression of different groups.

Military Officers	56% favorable	6% unfavorable
Ministers	44% favorable	9% unfavorable
Born Again Christians	32% favorable	17% unfavorable
Democrats	32% favorable	12% unfavorable
Real Estate Agents	30% favorable	8% unfavorable
Actors	25% favorable	7% unfavorable
Lawyers	24% favorable	5% unfavorable
Republicans	23% favorable	8% unfavorable
Evangelicals	22% favorable	22% unfavorable
Prostitutes	5% favorable	11% unfavorable

Rev. Mike Ramsdell, August 7 / 8, 2010  
 Check out my blog at [mikeramsdell.com](http://mikeramsdell.com).  
 GPS Guide online at: [www.growpraystudy.org](http://www.growpraystudy.org)



## Introduction

1 John 4:8 contains the central affirmations of the Christian faith. The apostle John writes, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." In his Gospel, John writes in one of the most famous passages from the New Testament, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son." At the heart of faith, we find a God who loves and longs to interact with creation out of that love.

The church was designed to be the embodiment of God's love, but for some has instead been experienced as a place of judgement and condemnation. What we will find in our readings is that this is not something new. It goes back to the time of Jesus and the religious leaders who clashed with Jesus. As we read their stories, our hope is that we will each be challenged to consider how God might be calling each of us to "reinvest" ourselves in a world that God so deeply loves.

May this prayer guide you in your reading.

***Holy and loving God, I give you thanks today for the love that you have planted in my heart. God, please help that seed of hope and grace to grow in my life that I may not only see my own life in a new way but once again commit myself to loving your world with the same love that you do.***



## TUESDAY 08.10.10

## Luke 11:37-41

Even a casual reading of the gospels would reveal that Jesus and the Pharisees were often at odds over their interpretation of their shared Jewish beliefs and religious practice. Jesus' rebuke of these leaders was one simple and consistent message. While the practice of their faith was dedicated to action, it was wholly divorced from heart change.

- In this exchange, Jesus is not denying that our faith should include action. Taking his entire teaching into consideration, that would certainly be inconsistent with his overall message. Jesus was intent on "reforming" our hearts. How would you describe the heart change you have experienced in your faith journey thus far?
- How has your heart change inspired more visible changes in the way you live your life? If there was one thing inside your heart you thought God would be most interested in "getting clean," what would it be?

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## MONDAY 08.09.10

## Matthew 7:1-5

Jesus' words from Matthew 7 are often used in rebuke of someone we perceive to be too "judgemental." Yet, we should be careful to not ignore the direction Paul gives to the church at Thessalonica near the end of his first letter [5:21] when he says, "Test everything, hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil." Can you think of examples where making a proper "judgment" is not only a good but necessary thing?

- Is it possible to judge without being "judgemental"? If so, how might we make a distinction between sound judgment and a judgmental spirit?
- Jesus says that "the measure you use, it will be measured to you." In other words, grace that we receive is meant to be shared. Who in your life has modeled this for you? How might God be calling you today to share this same grace?

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## WEDNESDAY 08.11.10

## Luke 18:9-14

The modern reader might be tempted to believe that Jesus is speaking in hyperbole in this text, exaggerating the specifics of the story in order to drive home his message. Could the Pharisees really have been so self-righteous as to pray, "God, thank you that I'm not like those 'other' people"? Jesus' interactions with the Pharisees and their own attacks of him which are documented throughout the gospels affirm this unhealthy behavior and belief. Apparently, being God's people had become a privilege rather than a calling.

- From beginning to end, the Bible speaks of the "responsibility" of being a child of God. What are those responsibilities? How might they guide us in our interactions with others?
- What does the tax collector model in his prayer that God might be calling you to emulate in your life today?

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