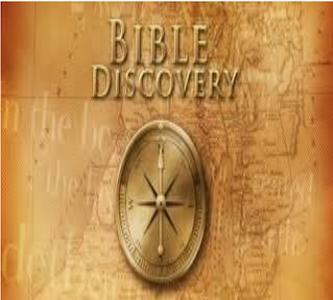


November 8, 2015

Luke 15:3-10

## Knowing God, Trusting Jesus



Jennifer Fulwiler's a writer and host of her own show on SiriusXM. I like what she says of people who place *radical trust* in God. She says, "'By 'radical' I don't mean reckless or imprudent, but I'm referring to the difficult, very counter-cultural act of recognizing God's sovereignty over every area of our lives.'" What common threads are there for those who live their lives surrendered and settled in the hands of God? Foremost they're people who, knowing their heavenly Father, filled with His Holy Spirit, place their total trust in Jesus.

Such trust as of Brother Yun, a persecuted pastor in China. After facing weeks of torture, including electrocution, starvation, beatings, and having needles shoved under his fingernails, he was thrown in a box 4' long, 3' wide and 4' high, where he was to stay indefinitely. The day after he was put in this mini-cell, he felt prompted to pray for a Bible — a ridiculous idea, considering many were in prison at that very moment for being in possession of just such contraband. Yet he prayed anyway. Inexplicably by human reasoning, his prison guards threw a Bible into the cell the next morning. As we trust and obey God, God shows He's bigger than our circumstances! Over and over again people like Brother Yun show they've crystal clarity that suffering's not the worst evil — sin is. Sin means separation from God, a broken relationship with Jesus. In the original Hebrew, the word we've translated to sin, didn't mean to do wrong, it meant to 'miss' — to miss the mark, to forget who you were. It's from this we get misconduct or misbehaviour. The root word means literally, forgetfulness. To sin is to forget God, to miss out on relationship with Him, to go our own way rather than God's direction shown us in His Son Jesus. Yes, believers like Yun prefer to miss suffering, sometimes praying for relief but their focus is not missing God, not forgetting what is truly eternally life threatening and choosing what is more essential through explicit trust in Jesus to keep them from *sinning* (missing / forgetting) and showing them the path they are to tread, trusting in Him rather than foremost concern on suffering or other matters of living.

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We too must turn to Jesus, trusting in Him as our promised Saviour. Right from the beginning, following the fall of Adam and Eve, God promised someone would come; someone would deal with humanity's most basic problem — sin. That person would be no less a person than God's own Son, Jesus. Did you know there are over 300 prophecies in the Old Testament that we see fulfilled in the New Testament in the Lord Jesus Christ covering many different aspects of who He is and what He came to do? Prophecies regarding Jesus' birth, His ministry on earth, His death on a cross for our sins, and His resurrection were all told hundreds of years earlier. It wasn't until Jesus' resurrection His disciples understood exactly who Jesus is. Further, as we truly mine the Old Testament for all its worth, we discover that the focus and fulfilment of all prophecies contained in scripture is Jesus. The OT would come alive having impact in our daily lives if we'd only put our "Jesus spectacles" on! That's why Paul exclaims, "*For no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'yes in Christ'.*" [2 Corinthians 1:20]

With so many promises about Christ in the Old Testament of the Bible — given with amazing detail and accuracy — it's hard to understand why — and how — people continue to fail to believe in Him! I mean really? It's a choice they make just as much as it's a choice each follower of Jesus makes to accept Him as their Lord and Saviour. I believe it takes a greater leap of faith to not believe in Him given the evidence. Perhaps it's because all of this requires not only it be intellectually accepted but that we have a total change of heart for us to grasp how high, how wide, how long and how deep the Father's love for us has been in giving us a Saviour. It's this change of heart that leads us to trust in Jesus.

It is good to know, however, as we journey to trust in Jesus, that we've never heard of a person with a deep trust in Jesus who didn't set aside time for focused prayer every day. Like any close relationship, our trust in Jesus requires work, time and commitment. I've noticed such people always spend time focused on nothing but prayer, every day. Mostly they tend to do it at the start of their day, centering themselves in Christ, before tackling anything else the day may bring. I suggest a good place is before you even get out of bed. If you have

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not developed the habit, start the attitude of gratitude through a simple prayer such as, "Good morning Lord, I give you my day and thank you for this wonderful opportunity to serve you. Amen."

But where does such trust begin? If we want to know God personally, to walk with Him and have Him lead us through all eternity, then there's only one way we'll find Him, and that's through His Son, who God sent to lead the way, that is through Jesus! As Luke records Peter's words, "*Only Jesus has the power to save! His name is the only one in all the world that can save anyone.*"

[Acts 4:12 CEV]

Now I've been asked from time to time to give direction as possibly so have you. Some years ago, working with MTO Enforcement on the eastbound lanes of highway 401 in Eastern Ontario, a motorist pulled over behind my cruiser and asked how much further to Toronto. Being the great help I am, I explained if he kept going in the direction he was, it would be quite a while and he was likely to get wet! I did eventually advise him to turn around. Perhaps I've a little of the personality which would fit well in India. I'm told that guides there will direct you to places they don't know how to get to. Since it's culturally rude to not know, or not tell, they will guide you anyway. The philosophy seems to be: going somewhere is better than going nowhere!

Going somewhere is better than going nowhere. That pretty much sums up much of what we find in religion today. We're told, all roads lead to God in the end so why worry about which road you're on? Lifestyles and belief systems are never wrong, they're just different. There's no absolute truth, just our understanding individually of truth for us. But God would disagree just as Jesus disagreed. In fact, Jesus said the only way to God is through Him! Only in Christ do we see God coming to find His lost people – not the other way around. Jesus was never merely a teacher, prophet, guru, or guide; He actually is God incarnate, the visible display of an invisible Father. Jesus shows His purpose in coming in three parables describing the search

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for the lost and the great rejoicing over the lost being found. We focused on the parable of the lost sheep (vs. 3-7) and the lost coin (vs. 8-10) but Jesus also tells the story of the prodigal or lost son following these parables. Each is a parable of our life without Christ and of our serious condition which, if left among the lost determines our eternal destiny, forever separated from our Heavenly Father, experiencing the full agony of our sin-stained lives. Yet the emphasis is not on our guilt, nor on the matter of our being lost – the focus is that, with Jesus, lost things are found! Listen to what may be considered the mission statement for Jesus' ministry... "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*" [Luke 19:10]

Just as the sheep and the coin could not find themselves back into the arms of their owners; just as the wayward son had no expectation of returning to the family as a trusted son but sought only the shelter of a hired hand, in each instance we see the wonderful grace of God displayed as not only is the lost found but there is great rejoicing and celebration over the fact that the lost has been found. Jesus announces the great truth with each of our parables today, first at verse 7, "*I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent*" and similarly at verse 10, "*In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents*". It seems to me the message is clear that God – and all of heaven with Him, is excited about a sinner who comes home!

***The message of the gospels is the message of today.*** There's been no change in the last 2,000 years. People are still the same; we've the same inner struggles as people did then. The good news is Jesus is

the same too. *“Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.”* [Hebrews 13:8] Because He’s still the same, our message remains the same. We’re still called to go and tell; we’re still commissioned to live our lives as witnesses of our wonderful Saviour, equipped with the Holy Spirit and trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ to guide and direct us each day. As the eternal Son of God, Jesus is able and willing to do today what He did 2,000 years ago. When you’re asked why you follow Jesus, you can simply say, “Jesus saves”! He saved the lost by dying on the cruel cross of Calvary. He paid the price of our sins and re-established our relationship with His Father. He saved all who are willing to repent of their way, to do a U-turn and stop going their own way and start living God’s way. It means being truly sorry for our former way of life and turning from our sin to God. The great news is that your brothers and sisters, your parents and children, your neighbours and friends, all who have sinned and are lost - since all have sinned and fallen short of God’s perfection – yes everyone can find salvation in Jesus Christ.

Without being trite, can I suggest that trusting in Jesus and finding salvation is as easy as A-B-C? If you do not know Jesus as a personal friend and Saviour consider these three simple steps to faith; and if you have a friend or loved one who has not heard the good news that Jesus saves and wants them to be saved from their sins, then share these A-B-C’s with them today.

- **Accept** what God has said about us as sinners. Stop explaining away or blaming others and confess meaning to come ‘clean’ before our Almighty God. Accept you can’t do a thing to save yourself and ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

- **Believe** that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and that three days later God raised Him physically from the grave as proof that His sacrifice for our sins had been accepted. Believe that everything Jesus said and everything Jesus did can be accepted as truth for it comes from God and is confirmed through the demonstration of fulfilled prophecy. Believe that because of all that has been fulfilled in Christ at his first appearance we can trust that He is coming again in power and authority as judge and as king, just as He has promised.

- **Commit** your life to Jesus. As the Apostle John encourages us, *“To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”* [John 1:12] Let Jesus take complete control of everything; make Him, **‘Lord of everything’!**

God wants us to know Him, to know Him within a personal relationship. If we come to Him, wanting to turn away from our sin scared lives, we can only do so by trusting Jesus. If you have not made certain that you are in a right relationship with God won’t you today choose to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and His death on the cross for us and accept that our sins are forgiven in Him, and that He accepts us just as we are without one plea except the blood of Jesus shed for you and me.

If the Lord has touched you through today’s message, give us a call or send an email to Mt Brydges Baptist Church. If you’re in the area on Sunday afternoons we meet at 3 pm at the facilities of Community Christian Centre, Allen Road at Adelaide Road S. We’d love for you to join us in worship and celebrate life in Christ.

*Blessings,  
Pastor Dave*

