

Sermon Title: The 1st Principle of Heavenly Party Planning

Sermon Text: Luke 15:1-7

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to become intentional seekers of sinners.

Sermon Proposition: There are 3 aspects of Heavenly Party Planning in the seeking phase.

I. The 1st step is to seek the right prospects. V.1-2

A. The 1st prospects on the invitation list were **tax collectors**. V.1a

“Tax gatherers were at the bottom of the list categorically among bad people. Tax gatherers were seen as traitors. The Jews despised this occupation and for a Jew to buy a tax franchise and then become employed by Rome to exact taxes from his own people was to be the ultimate traitor. And so, here was this man who would buy a franchise and then he would hire underlings among his people who would collect the taxes. There were all kinds of taxes.”

There was a personal income tax, there was a poll tax just for existing to be paid by men fourteen to sixty-five and women twelve to sixty-five in those age groups. There was the tax on the land that consisted of one-tenth of all the grain grown, one-fifth of the wine and oil that could be paid in kind or commuted in money. There was a tax on your cart. A tax on each wheel on your cart, and a tax on the number of animals pulling your cart. The tax on articles bought and articles sold, import tax, and export tax.

Tax collectors were thereby banned from the synagogue. They could not enter into the festivals and feast days of the land of the people. Therefore, when a person became a tax collector, in every sense they became an outcast. They were cutoff from the lifestyle of their peoples socially, they were cut off from the life of their people religiously. They were known in general as a very bad group of people.

“In fact, one Roman writer tells us surprisingly that he once saw a monument built to an honest tax collector. The very fact that there was such a man deserved a monument in the eyes of some people.”

B. The 2nd prospects on the invitation list were **sinners**. V.1b

Sinners is a general category for people who are bad, they had bad reputations. They were a criminal element. They might be robbers and murders, harlots, prostitutes, and liars, there might be all kinds of sins that they were engaged in. But the bottom line on sinners is they were engaged in. But the bottom line on sinners is they were people who made no effort at all to live by the standard of Jewish law. For all intent purposes, they had no regard for the ceremony, the ritual, the traditions or even the revelation and constituted defined Judaism. They were bad people.

C. The 3rd prospects on the invitation were the **self-righteous**. V.2

To associate with those kinds of people was contaminating; to eat with them was absolutely unthinkable. We have to understand in the Middle East that to have a meal with someone was to treat them as an honored guest or an honored friend and to have dinner or lunch or any association with a tax collector and a sinner would be, to honor the absolutely dishonorable.

Therefore the Pharisees and the scribes in their typical legalistic self-righteousness said this man receives sinners and eats with them. But that is why He came to seek and serve (the lost). (The Pharisees had no heart for the outcast, no heart for sinners, no heart for the lost.)

Why did they continue to come hear Jesus? Obviously they sensed that Jesus accepted their presence. He did not accept their lifestyles or patterns of sin, He spoke boldly against their sin but they sensed in Him that seeking heart which marks the nature of God and marked the nature of Christ who sought sinners for the purpose of not approving their sins but of saving them out of their sin. The church is the continuation of this passionate burden. (Luke 5:27-31; 18:9-14)

Luke 7:34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"

II. The 2nd step is to seek the right principles. V.3-6

A. The 1st principle is that people are **lost**. V.3-4a

Shepherds were the lowest peoples, they were the lowest people on the earth, the lowlife, the scum, the unacceptable, the unclean in the society of the Jews. Of all the legitimate jobs, they were at the bottom. Jesus was always striking at the self-righteous pride of the false leaders of Israel.

They actually despised shepherds . . . real shepherds who lived with sheep, the dirtiest of all animals. And they had established in Jewish society that anybody who was a shepherd was unclean. (**Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:31**)

Most families had up to maybe 15 sheep, peasant people living in a village. They would consolidate into one great flock. (**John 10**)

Rule #1 You don't lose sheep.

B. The 2nd principle is that lost people are **sought**. V.4b

If one of the sheep goes away, you find it and you don't come back until you bring it back alive, dead, or you bring back a piece of it snatched from a predators mouth. But you don't come back without a sheep. Everybody hearing this parable knew the shepherds responsibility. You go and look for the lost sheep and leave the other 99 in the pasture with the other shepherds.

No sacrifice would be too great and not time and effort, enterprise would be too demanding. Lost sheep, by the way are in grave danger separated from the shepherd and flock.

C. The 3rd principle is that sought people must be **found**. V.4c-5

"When," because there is no option, not "if." The shepherd is not lazy. This shepherd is not indifferent, nor can any shepherd afford to be. When he finds the sheep, he would take it, lay it on his shoulders (70-75 lbs.).

He does this with rejoicing, because the sheep has value. (Sinners have value to God!) He picks it up and puts it on the back of his neck and rejoices, even though he knows the hard part is ahead, even possibly traveling back in darkness. (for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross.)

D. The 4th principle is that found people must be **celebrated**. V.6

III. The 3rd step is to seek the right purpose. V.7

"The whole story is about the joy of God when a lost sinner is sought, found, and saved. And the purpose of the story is, how can God be so eager, that God can be so desirous, that God can be so concerned to seek and save the lost, and you, who claim to be God's representatives on earth only despise the lost? This couldn't be further from God's heart and passion. The church is caught up in superficiality and triviality while souls all around you are perishing. (**Matthew 9:ff; Luke 19:10**)

The whole joy of heaven is predicated on the fact that God is filled with joy, our joy over sinners being saved, should come from God's joy.

Introduction: The definitive truth found throughout scripture is that God is a seeking Savior. Our God, the one true and living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of the Holy Scriptures, He along with all of Heaven, rejoices at one great occasion that takes place in an otherwise depressing and sin contaminated world. That occasion that brings great joy to the heart of God, is the salvation of one lost sinner. This revelation is clearly seen in v.7 is really the theme of this chapter. It is about Heaven's joy of recovering the lost, seen in v. 10 and in v.32. The Bible consistently speaks of this as the Holy Trinity's purpose, as well as each Christian's purpose.

Isaiah 53:4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. **5** But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. **6** All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. **11** He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. **12** Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

Matthew 1:21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

Luke 19:10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

1 Timothy 1:15 This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

Matthew 18:11 "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

The main point is the purpose of Christ's incarnation, but the result of the fulfillment of this purpose being accomplished, is the joy of Heaven over lost sinners being restored. That is what starts the celebration in the presence of God. We can then say, that anyone who does not participate and rejoice over lost sinners being found and brought to God, by faith in Jesus Christ, is totally out of touch with God.