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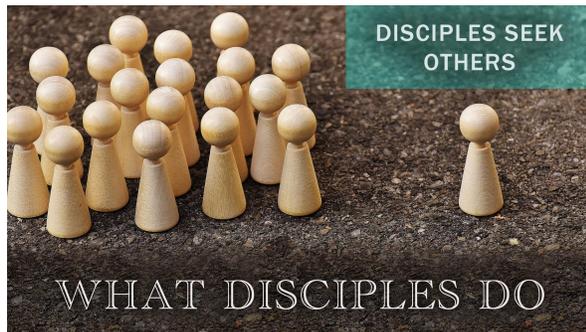
Title: What Disciples Do: Disciples Seek Others

Preaching: Danny Gulden, Lead Pastor, Promise Road Campus

Text: [Luke 15:1-10](#)

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[Watch the service](#)



I once took a group of people to a corn maze, and after a while, we decided to split up into teams of three. Then at the end, when most everyone was back, one group was missing someone. They had two group members instead of three because they had lost their third team member in the corn maze. So several adults went back into the maze to look for the missing person. Eventually, we found her, and she said, "I am glad someone came looking for me."

As we continue our *What Disciples Do* series, we pause to be grateful that someone came looking for each of us, and we think about what it means to look for others.

We pick up in Luke where Jesus is teaching to a large crowd. He has already talked about the cost of discipleship, the cost of following Jesus. Now he gets to the benefits of discipleship. He begins to tell stories known as parables, which are designed to turn upside down the way that we think the world works.

Let's hear the text:

¹All the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus to listen to him. ²The Pharisees and legal experts were grumbling, saying, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

³Jesus told them this parable: ⁴'Suppose someone among you had one hundred sheep and lost one of them. Wouldn't he leave the other ninety-nine in the pasture and search for the lost one until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he is thrilled and places it on his shoulders. ⁶When he arrives home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Celebrate with me because I've found my lost sheep." ⁷In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who changes both heart and life than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to change their hearts and lives.'

⁸ “Or what woman, if she owns ten silver coins and loses one of them, won’t light a lamp and sweep the house, searching her home carefully until she finds it? ⁹ When she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Celebrate with me because I’ve found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, joy breaks out in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who changes both heart and life” (Luke 15:1-10 CEB).

One lost sheep, one lost coin. The parable turns the way we think the world works upside down. You would think that if you had one-hundred sheep and were able to keep track of ninety-nine, it’s pretty good.

Let’s look at some other examples where the stats are even worse:

- Peyton Manning completed 65% of his passes in his career.
- Reggie Miller made 40% of his 3-point attempts in his career.
- Tony Gwynn had a career batting average of .338.

These are sports stars, but In God’s economy, these stats are nowhere close to good enough. This is good news for you. It’s good news for those who feel far away from God. It’s good news for the whole world.

When the lost sheep is found and the lost coin is found, there is celebration and there is joy. This is what Jesus tells a large crowd, what Jesus tells a group of people who are grumbling that he eats with sinners and tax collectors. He says, let me tell you what God is like. When one is found, when one comes to God and understands their place in God’s grand design, there is joy and there is celebration. He says to the grumblers, you think you have something to grumble about now, just you wait.

Pharisees and scribes make a distinction for who is welcome and who God loves. They believe a distinction between good and bad is essential to the righteousness of a community, for the flourishing of a community. Jesus wants them to know, the crowd to know, us to know that there is no distinction. The righteous community has no distinction. Jesus welcomes all. The Christian community has no distinction and cannot flourish unless all are present and accounted for. Jesus makes this clear.

So, what do Disciples do? We start with two words that we mainline church folks don’t like a whole lot: “repentance” and “evangelism.”

“In the same way, I tell you, joy breaks out in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who changes both heart and life” (Luke 15:10 CEB).

Other translations use the word “repentance.” Repentance is a main theme of all of scripture, and we have misunderstood and misused it in the church today.

The Hebrew word used in the Old Testament that we understand as “repent” means to turn or to return.

This relates directly to Israel's experience of exile in Babylon, to their return to their homeland. To repent means to embark on a journey of a return to God.

At the beginning of the New Testament, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus appears and says the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe in the good news. The word "repent" has Greek roots. Here, repentance means to go beyond the mind that we have.

When Jesus speaks of repentance he is speaking of a return to God from exile, a return to the way of the Lord, and in doing so, going beyond the mind we have. We are called to see in a new way, a way shaped by God and known in Jesus.

So, when people repent by returning to God, seeing in a new way, and living in a way shaped by God and known in Jesus. God rejoices. God is passionate about this, which is why Disciples seek others.

There was a young boy named Nick. One day Nick's mom walked by his room and saw a curious scene: Nick was reading his Bible to the family cat, Whiskers. A little later in the day, Nick's mom walked outside, and Nick was pouring water over poor Whiskers.

She said, "Nick. What are you doing?"

And Nick replied, "I'm baptizing Whiskers."

She said, "Don't do that. Cats don't like water."

Nick said, "Well then, Whiskers shouldn't have joined my church."

Now, I like Nick's passion for seeking others, even if it is a bit misguided. "Evangelism," the e-word, is not about growing a church. It's not about doing what the pastor thinks she should. It's not about saving someone from some sort of eternal damnation or molding them into living the way we think they should live based on our own prejudices. We seek others because God seeks others

We seek others because it is life-giving when one returns to God, when one goes beyond the mind they have, when one begins to see the world the way God sees the world. Jesus tells us that when one is found, the joy cannot be contained. Jesus invites all, even his critics, to celebrate.

We can overcomplicate what disciples do, what a community of disciples do. When we are at our best, we are encouraging one another and those outside our community to turn and return to God, to go beyond the mind we currently have, to see our lives and the world the way God sees those things.

Picture yourself in that corn maze or perhaps somewhere else, feeling lost. How would you feel if you were simply left to your own devices and no one came looking for you? After all, everyone else in your group was found and accounted for, so what's the big deal?

Disciples seek others. 88% of people attend a church because someone first invited them. It's a small piece in terms of someone being found, but it's a start. It's the beginning of letting someone know they are not alone, that there is a place for them to find greater meaning and purpose. Your invitation matters. Your invitation brings God joy. It is cause for celebration.

Friends, this is some of the best news of all. At some point in our lives, at many points in our lives, God was looking for us. God is seeking us.

When one returns to God,
when one experiences transformation,
what one sees and lives in the world as God intends,
there is celebration.
There is great joy.

Let us pray.