

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 15- Luke 15:1-7

263- The Son of Man Has Come to Seek and to Save
That Which is Lost- Part 1

November 9, 2014

Luke 15:1-7

1 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.

2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

3 So He told them this parable, saying,

4 "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

5 "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'

7 "I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

To the Glory of God

The concept that an all-powerful and all-wise God would care about wicked sinners, and actually love them and seek to forgive and redeem them- at great cost to Himself is the single most amazing and glorious concepts in all the universe. And this concept is patently unique to Biblical Christianity and sets the religion of Jesus apart from every other religion and human philosophy on earth.

Nobody else teaches this except us. Nobody else believes this except us. And nobody else experiences this except us. We are the only people in all the world who can sing,

Jesus love me- this I know
For the Bible tells me so

All the other man-made and false religions and philosophies on earth teach a variation of the very same thing- that God is sitting apart from us- very distant from us- basically unconcerned, and that we have to do something to earn God's Favor; that we have to start or stop certain things in order to earn a place in Heaven. All other religions teach that we have to keep religious duties or partake of sacraments or memorize certain information or engage in certain activities or participate in certain rituals in order to be good enough to be forgiven and redeemed.

All religions birthed from doctrines of demons like Judaism and Hinduism and Buddhism and Islam and Shintoism and Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and Seventh Day Adventist and Christian Scientists and Scientology and Secular Humanism and all of their various sects and manifestations- all teach the very same thing- that we have to sow our own fig leaves together, that we have to climb up to the stars, that we have to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps in order to become good enough to enter into Heaven.

Only Biblical Christianity teaches that God comes to us, that God bends down to be like us, that God takes on human flesh and becomes Man and walks among us. Only the 66 books of the Holy Bible teach that this great God genuinely loves human beings, that God will forgive and rescue them from His Own Just Wrath- at the cost of His Own Son- by what He Himself does for us- even if we initially don't want it or even ask for it. Turn with me to **Jeremiah 31** and as your eyes feast on these inspired words- be prepared to become speechless- **Jeremiah 31:31:**

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

... here is how Ezekiel prophesied it would be:

Ezekiel 36:25-27

25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

Notice that God says that He and He alone- all by Himself- will do for us what we *cannot* do for ourselves. So the wonder of the New Covenant and Sovereign Election is that it doesn't matter how sinful you have been, and it doesn't matter how long you have been sinful. If God has chosen to save you- He will come to you- in the filth of your life, and God Himself will do all that is needed- including die in your place and absorb all of God's Wrath on your behalf.

God is determined to make a people for Himself, and God Himself will do whatever it takes- including take on human flesh and live among us as Jesus Christ- and live among us for 33-1/2 years, and then die and rise the third day so that underserving sinners may be forgiven and declared to be Righteous and adopted into God's Family and live with Him forever. It is truly an amazing thing.

And there were not any greater sinners back in the 1st Century who were less deserving of God's Mercy and who were more needful of God's Grace than the tax collectors.

Now as you may remember- that in the society where Jesus lived and walked- tax collectors were the lowest of the low. Every tax collector had to buy their tax franchise from the despised Roman

Government, and so a portion of all that he collected would go back to the Romans- in addition to the tax itself. And whatever else he charged would be his to keep. And this made tax collectors to be some of the wealthiest people in Israel. But it also made them, to be the worst and the most hated people in Israel to the average Jew. But this despising was not merely because of the taxes- but that these people had abandoned their own and had betrayed their fellow Jews in order to become cozy with the pagan Romans.

And this is why Jesus Himself said that people who lay claim to being saved and who went through the process of becoming formal members of the Church and yet who do not continue on to love and serve and obey Jesus- but who are knowingly and willfully engaged in ongoing sin and who refuse to repent are subject to this same degree of rejection and disdain. Please turn with me to read the "red-letter words" of our Lord from **Matthew 18:15**:

15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

16 "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that *BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.*

17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Now this- of course- is what is called "Church Discipline", and is used to bring sinning believers to a place of brokenness and repentance so that they may maintain their right standing with God.

And you will notice that there are four steps to Church Discipline:

1. An initial private confrontation
2. A second private confrontation with two witnesses due to no repentance
3. Bringing the unrepentant member before the Church for the Church to pray and implore the person to repent
4. Excommunication of the unrepentant one

Now keep in mind that the purpose of Church Discipline is not about throwing people out in the yard- but rather to bring people who

say they are saved and yet who are engaged in ongoing and unrepentant sin back into alignment with God.

And this shows the truth about the connection of sin with genuine believers- that while it is true that saved people continue to sin after conversion- it is also true that saved people hate their sin and they struggle relentlessly against their sin to overcome it- and they do not easily engage in it without remorse and they do not celebrate it.

But sadly, part of the laid back, lackadaisical attitude by many in the modern Church is that what Jesus clearly tells us to do here is seen today as being unloving or seen as driving people away from the Church- both of which are patently false. The Church of Jesus engages in Church Discipline for the very same reason that parents correct their children and teach them what is and what is not acceptable behavior- because they love them and want the very best for them.

We must understand that saved people do not have the right to live anyway they see fit- but are underneath the Lordship Demands of Jesus Christ – who owns them precisely because He has bought and paid for them and they are now His bond-servants.

And what we need to remember is that truly saved people have no problem at all with struggling against the lusts of their flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit to be found humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in their daily lives- all to the Glory of God. That is what saved people do- that is what they live for, that is what they pray to do, and that is the pathway to the fullness of their joy.

And so genuinely saved people do not *want* to fight against God, they don't want to kick against the pricks, and they have no desire to rebel against the revealed Will of God. Their nature has been transformed and they now live with abandon to this radical Love of Jesus Christ. And so if people who have this new Divine nature get caught up in sinful behavior, and a brother or sister loves them enough to confront them- they respond with gratefulness and joy- that God loves them so much that He will not let them go.

It is only with an ongoing persistence in sin without remorse and without repentance that brings the sinning member to the fourth stage of Church Discipline where Jesus said:

... if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

So Jesus says here to treat the sinning member who refuses to repent as though he were lost. And Jesus uses two very important words to describe a person like this. The Lord Jesus Christ- the Head of the Church- says we are to treat those who have the audacity to continue to do what is right in their own eyes in spite of three separate attempts at reconciliation as though they were a:

- A. Gentile
- B. Tax Collector

Now in this context- a "Gentile" is an unbeliever- a person who acts and lives as though he has no knowledge of God and who lives as though he has no connection to the Truth. In the context of Salvation- a Gentile is one who Paul told the Ephesian believers was:

Ephesians 2:12b

... separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

...and then also notice that in addition to treating the sinning member as a Gentile- we are told here by the Lord Jesus Himself to treat unrepentant members as though they were "Tax Collectors"- someone who has betrayed his own people and who has willfully rejected his own heritage and who has joined himself to the pagans.

Now some would argue, *"But Brother Blair, these are saved people! We can't treat saved people like this- this is barbaric!"* And my response is three-fold:

- ✓ If they are truly saved- they should repent of sin and prove that their nature has been transformed by the Sovereign Work of Jesus Christ.
- ✓ Why would a genuinely saved person persist in known sin- especially after having been approached by the Church three different times?
- ✓ Now that they have been excommunicated- we should make efforts to continue to pray for them and to continually compel them to repent.

And keep in mind that these people who are excommunicated are not simply removed from membership from that individual local Church- but they are now cut off from the entire worldwide Church of Jesus Christ until they repent. And every Pastor and every Church where these people might wander off to- has the duty and solemn obligation to *refuse* fellowship and membership to these excommunicated people until they have made it right with the Church from where they were cast off.

And 150 years ago- these people had nowhere to go- because almost every Church held the Bible in high esteem- and the pressure put on them because nobody would fellowship with them drove these people to their knees. However, today, sadly, excommunicated people can walk right down the street and formally join another Church and sing in the choir and be a member in good standing without that new Church even caring what happened before.

Dear friends- we have a duty to strive to be Biblical and even though we will sometimes fail to uphold the Biblical Standard- we must always humbly strive to operate the Church according to what King Jesus has said- because after all- the Church belongs to Him.

Now while what I am saying here is certainly not all that you need to understand about Church Discipline by a long shot- it does illustrate the point here that a tax collector was a very despised person in 1st Century Israel. The Professor Emeritus of New Testament Exegesis at Aberdeen College in Scotland, I.H. Marshall, said,

“The tax gatherers were cordially hated and despised by their fellow countrymen—not only because they were looked on as unpatriotic, and dishonest, and greedy, but also because their job made them ritually unclean. So pious Jews saw them as being alienated from God.” (*Luke*, p. 143)

And yet these are the men who Dr. Luke says here in verse 1 that were coming near to Jesus to listen to Him. Read with me **Luke 15:1** again together:

Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.

So there were two groups coming to Jesus to listen to Him:

- ❖ The despised tax collectors
- ❖ Sinners

Now at first glance- this sounds strange to us, because we know that *all* people are sinners. But Dr. Luke was not simply describing these two groups- he was using terminology reserved for a class of people who were marked by manifestly immoral lives or questionable occupations- people that no respectable Jew would have anything to do with. You can see an example of who is in mind here from **Matthew 21:31** where Jesus said,

Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you.

... or another example would be people with certain diseases or disabilities that many would take as a sign that they had committed some great sin that had brought about- in one case- blindness from birth- like we see over in **John 9**. So these "sinners" that Luke describes here were people who were physically and morally unapproachable.

And the point here is that these people: the tax-gatherers, the prostitutes, the maimed, and diseased- who were basically, the social and religious outcasts- these are the people who were coming to Jesus! And even more shocking than them coming to Jesus is that Jesus was receiving them and eating with them!

And this was so obviously offensive and morally incorrect to the self-righteous Pharisees and scribes that they didn't even have to give any reason for their displeasure. All they had to do was state the obvious fact- and the guilt was plain to everyone. Look again at verse 2:

Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them.

And that's all they had to say. Jesus did this and so He was guilty. And the discussion was over and the case was closed. And we know from several sources outside the New Testament about some of the Principles that guided these religious hypocrites' behavior. One ancient rabbinical writing said:

"Let not a man associate with the wicked, not even to bring him to the law" (Strack-Billerbeck, II, 208).

And the whole premise behind evil and ungodly statements like that is that there are certain people who commit certain sins that are supposedly beyond Redemption, and, therefore, in the mind of these Pharisees- a truly spiritual person- a righteous person who loves and serves God- would never have anything to do with such a person- not even to give him an opportunity to hear the Truth and repent and believe and be saved.

In other words for the followers of this demonic religion- "physical separatism" and "outward ritualistic purity" was more important than preaching to the lost and allowing lost people an opportunity to hear God's Law, and perhaps obtain forgiveness and restoration. And so as far as these Pharisees were concerned- Jesus was just as unclean and just as lawless as the tax collectors and other sinners were. And the only logical conclusion that these men could come to was- that not only was Jesus *not* condemning these people- but Jesus must actually be *approving* of their sin- because He joined with them in their meals. Back in **Luke 7:33**- Jesus said,

33 "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!'"

34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"

35 "Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

So Jesus is looked at here by these self-righteous men as being ritually unclean and lawless and guilty of the very same wickedness and dishonesty and immorality that they associated with these sinners.

But is that true? Is Jesus guilty of the same sins as these wicked sinners and tax collectors? Or even more importantly- is Jesus actually *condoning* what these men did and how they lived their lives by associating with them? Is it true- as some teach today- that Jesus was so determined to protest against "the establishment" that He didn't think what these men were doing was wrong or at least not *as* wrong as the hypocrisy of the Pharisees? Is that the Message that we should take from this Passage? No, it is not.

Now we need to remember that Dr. Luke is putting his “Gospel Record” together in such a way to make some things crystal clear about Jesus. And so Luke chooses his accounts very carefully. What Luke writes here is not all that Jesus said or did. Jesus said and did a lot more than what Luke has recorded in this Book. But the good doctor puts these accounts together with a point in mind- as did Matthew, and John, Mark, and John. And so I want us to back up and walk with Luke from the beginning of Chapter 14 to our text here in Chapter 15. And as a side note- when I did this for myself- it doubled the impact of Jesus eating with sinners and *why* He gave us the Parable of the ninety and nine.

Now in **Luke 14:1–6** Jesus goes to eat with a Pharisee on the Sabbath. You see that in verse 1:

Luke 14:1a

It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on *the* Sabbath to eat bread...

So be careful of saying that Jesus only offered His acceptance and His fellowship to tax-collectors and immoral sinners by eating and associating only with them- because that isn't true. Here the Lord is eating with a Pharisee.

And please don't miss the obvious here: Even though Jesus is moving around among non-disciples- that's not all He did- even though He did do that a lot.

And then a man comes into the dinner who has dropsy. And this guy was a plant by the Pharisees- who wanted to trap Jesus- because this is exactly the kind of man that the Pharisees would normally never invite to dinner. And this man was swollen with an abnormal accumulation of fluid in the tissues and cavities of his body. So here is one of those people whose appearance did not help people feel pleasant- especially at dinner. But, in their case- they viewed this man as being immoral and that is why God had obviously judged him.

And Jesus asked the Pharisees if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. And they were silent. So Jesus instantly heals the man. And their response was absolute silence. No response at all to this breathtaking miracle- nothing. No humility, no conviction, no worship, and no repentance for the hardness of their heart. Just silence.

And why was that? Jesus puts His Finger on it in verses 7–11:

Luke 14:7b

... He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor *at the table*...

In other words these people are so in love with the praise and the approval of men that they cannot see the Glory of self-giving love in pursuit of Salvation. They see no reason at all to even give this man the opportunity to hear the Truth and be saved. And they expect Jesus to think like they do. Because what do they care about a man with a gross disease like dropsy? In their twisted view- a sick man who is lost is only diverting attention away from their main concern- which was how to be thought highly of.

So these men are blinded and hardened by their love affair with self-exaltation. And so Jesus shocks them by saying (in v. 10) that when they are invited to a dinner- they should go and recline at the *last* place. Because, as verse 11 says,

Luke 14:11

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

... which is completely foreign to them and conflicting with their goal of separation and false purity. Now keep in mind that this event is not recorded in the Bible simply so that we can all agree how terrible the Pharisees were. But so that we can see *ourselves* and do whatever we need to do by God's Grace and in the Power of the Holy Spirit to make sure that we are not like this, too. Because one of the great cravings of a sinful human heart is the pleasure of being exalted by the importance of the people we know and the people we spend time with.

We feel a kind of substitute significance when significant people take notice of us. We somehow feel validated when important people pay attention to us. But the danger is that if we love this feeling enough- it will make us completely indifferent to unimportant people, and that will eventually make us contemptuous of them to the point where we can clearly see that they are lost, and we are happy that they are lost and not care that they are lost.

In other words there is a close connection between the first issue in **Luke 14** and the second issue of humility- between apathy toward a man with dropsy and craving for the best seats at the feast. Because the point here for us is that craving our own honor blinds us to the beauty of being like Jesus and serving the lowly and being willing to understand that even the worst among us might be chosen by God.

So in verses 12–14 Jesus presses the issue of self-exaltation in a striking way when He said:

Luke 14:12b-14

12 ... When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment.

13 "But when you give a reception, invite *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,*

14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

So Jesus says to this man who invited him:

"You and your friends devote your life—in a kind of mutual admiration society—to having each other over for dinner and spending time with each other. And when you get together, you vie for getting the most attention from each other. And the result is that your life is one of "upright" indifference to the "the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind." Why? Because there is no payoff in this world for your self-exaltation. They can't invite you back. They are a kind of black hole of charity. You give and you give and you give, and they stay blind and lame and maimed and poor, so they can't invite you back."

So Jesus teaches that there is a reward if you love the outcast and the unimportant. Verse 14:

.... you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

In other words, the power to get free from bondage to self-exaltation and apathy toward unattractive people with dropsy is to love what God will be for you in the Resurrection more than you love

“hobnobbing” with important people and the pleasures of a closed dinner circle.

In other words, what frees you to live radically for others in this world is the confidence that this world is not the main world or even the most important world.

But we have to understand that the only people who think like that are people whom God has set His Love upon- even though right now- they may have dropsy, or right now- they may be a tax collector, or right now- they may be a sexually immoral person.

If any human being is able to truly comprehend that they are a wicked sinner and entirely deserving of God’s Wrath and that there is no good thing in them- then they are the people that Jesus was talking about when He said:

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

... so as children of Light- we are to be humble and gracious and kind and merciful- even to the worst people in society. And that was the Lesson from **Luke 14**. But now as we go into **Luke 15**- we must go even deeper and realize that lost people who have little or no money are not any closer to God than wealthy people who are lost are.

Everybody is born sinful- regardless of their status in this life- and *nobody* has a leg up on anybody else as it pertains to Salvation- simply because of their lack of finances or simply because they don’t run in the best social circles. The Holy Bible is not saying that poor people are closer to God than rich people- but rather that humble people are closer to God than arrogant people.

But when God sets His Love upon somebody- He gives them the ability to understand their lost condition- whether rich or poor. And that is what Jesus meant when He used the phrase, “poor in spirit”. This is also what He meant when He told us to “deny ourselves”. It all means the same thing- it means lost and sinful people in all sorts of human conditions- wealthy or poor, sick or healthy-who have been graced by God to be able to understand that there is no good thing in themselves and who understand that their sins are deserving of eternal damnation and who seek a merciful Savior.

And this ability to see that you are lost and need a Savior has nothing to do with human intellect or financial status or sharpness of mind. This is a gift from God- so it's not about being obvious. The plight of being lost is that absent a sovereign Move of God to awaken you- you don't think you're lost at all. And yet Jesus said seeing this is a requirement for anybody to be saved.

So we are all totally dependent on God to come to us to change us and to open our blind eyes and unstop our deaf ears and to give us a heart of flesh, or nobody would ever be convicted of a single sin, nobody would ever repent, and nobody would ever be saved.

And so if anyone-rich or poor, sick or healthy- is able to see that they need a Savior, if anyone is able to understand that there is nothing that they can do to correct their lost condition in and by and through their own human efforts- that means that God the Holy Spirit is "dealing" with that person, and I would suggest to you that the only people that God the Holy Spirit deals with are those whom God has chosen for Salvation.

And then back in **Luke 14:15-24** Jesus launches into a parable about a banquet. And this is a picture of God's invitation to the great banquet of Christianity. Verse 16:

A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many.
But one by one they refused to come. One had a field to go see (v. 18).
Another had to go check out five yoke of oxen (v. 19). Another had just married a wife and couldn't come (v. 20).

And notice that what these people are doing is not overtly sinful or evil things. This is not extravagance- just ordinary life that people hold more dear than Jesus, and that will absolutely keep them out of the kingdom.

So this is simply ordinary people living life as though this world is the main world and the most important world, and Jesus says that people who love this present evil world like this will give God some pretty flimsy excuses as to why they do not bow before Jesus and repent and follow Him.

And so the host of the dinner in the parable said to his servant (in verse 21),

Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.

Now notice that this list of people in verse 21 is exactly the same list as in verse 13. So he had told them before that when *they* give a dinner, they should invite the outcasts and the poor.

So Jesus is telling them with this Parable that this is what *God* does. God's Heart is expansive toward the spiritually poor and the spiritually crippled and the spiritually blind and the spiritually lame who are in terrible situations, and yet God has chosen to save them. Verse 23:

Luke 14:23

And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel *them* to come in, so that my house may be filled.'

And here we need to make the connection with **Luke 15**. You can see it clearly. In **Luke 15** Jesus is eating with tax-gatherers and immorally sinful people. And the Pharisees and scribes are grumbling about it. So what in the world is Jesus doing eating with these outcasts?

God intends for His House (Heaven) to be full and for His eternal food to be enjoyed. So He sends His Son to give His Life a ransom for many (**Mark 10:45**) and to personally call the guests to God's heavenly banquet.

... in other words- Jesus is seeking and saving that which is lost. But the scribes and Pharisees are too much in love with the seats of honor, and with the ordinary things of this world (fields, oxen, and family), to care much about heaven or harlots or people with dropsy and bad reputations. So Jesus goes to "the highways and hedges" (v. 24) to find the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame—and the tax-gatherers and sinners. And he eats with them.

Which means He gives them a foretaste of what the Father offers- a glorious Banquet with the accepting, forgiving Son of God. So what is He doing? Jesus is showing the Father's Heart and filling the Father's House. And that's what **Luke 15** is going to be about.

But what I wanted you to see this morning is that it is not just **Luke 15**. You can't just take one section or one Parable and take it

completely out of context to try to prove a point- and then think you're being Biblical. So to understand the fullness of this account here in **Luke 15**- you have to include what Jesus just said back in **Luke 14**. In fact- you have to take in to account the entirety of the whole Gospel of Luke, because it is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the main Message of the entire Record of Luke is:

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

... He sought them, He received them, He ate with them, and He saved them.

And we have no idea who God has chosen and so we have a mandate to work with everybody- regardless of their present evil condition- in the hope that God will do with them what He has so wondrously done with us.

And so it really doesn't matter what kind of shape they might be in now- all that matters is do they have an ear to hear? Do they have eyes to see? Do they have a heart to believe? And if they do- like these tax collectors and immoral people- then God has chosen them, and if they don't- like the scribes and Pharisees- then God has passed them over and will allow them to remain in their sins.

But the normal Pattern of God is- so that no flesh will boast against Him- God has basically chosen the weak and the ignorant and the foolish and the deaf and the blind and the incapable of this world.

So those who thought back then that Jesus was condoning these people's sins were wrong. And those who teach today that Jesus ate and fellowshiped with the worst people only because He was so determined to protest against the establishment are also wrong. Jesus would have eaten with every single one of these Pharisees and loved them and walked with them and saved them- but they would not. These religious men did not love Jesus and these tax collectors did. And the religious people did not love Jesus because they didn't want to. And that meant that God had not chosen them. And so God gave them what they had earned- Justice.

But the great mystery, dear friends, is that these tax collectors and these immoral people here didn't want to love and serve God initially any more than the Pharisees. They were just as lost as the

Pharisees were. The only difference was that from before the foundation of the world- before these people were born and before they did anything good or bad- God chose to set His Love upon them- for no other reason than He wanted to and here- we see the results of that Election- these wicked sinners are coming to Jesus. And so God chose to give these wicked sinners Grace- His undeserved Special Treatment, His unearned Favor, and His unobligated Love. And the result of that is that these wicked people came to Jesus. Elected sinners respond to the Effectual Call by coming to Jesus. And in this case- the tax collectors and immoral people came and the Pharisees and scribes did not.

Everybody who was there that day needed Salvation but these dirty people on that day are the ones that God had given to Jesus. Out of all the people who were there that day- these evil and sinful people- who had nothing to offer, nothing that would make them attractive to God in anyway- the people who were the least among them- these are the ones whom God chose to give to Jesus as a Gift of His Gracious Mercy and Jesus said in **John 6:37&38**

37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

And so out of His great Love for His Father- Jesus will eat with these wicked people, and Jesus will love these sinful human beings, and Jesus will gather these evil people into His Arms, and Jesus will forgive them and He will save them to the uttermost, and they will be His people. And the others will stand on the sidelines in their self-righteous pomp and criticize.

And this is our life and our hope—that we have a Savior like this and a Father like this. And we are the only people on the earth who do. Only Christians have a God like this. And what Chapters 14&15 makes plain is that to be saved by Jesus is a Divine Call to be like Jesus, and so as His Church- we should maintain three priorities:

1. We should exist to reflect the Grace of God back to Him in worship for His Glory.

2. We should exist to apply the Grace of God to each other in the Church for our edification in faith and love to the Glory of God.
3. We should exist to extend the Grace of God to those outside the faith in evangelism for the ingathering of God's elect from every people, tribe, tongue, and nation to the glory of God.

And in all these priorities we should live from the Grace of God and for the Glory of God. Our great charter should be **1Peter 4:11**,

Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

So everything we have and everything we do and everything we say is from His Grace and by His Strength and for His Glory! And that means that God Himself is the beginning and the middle and the end of the life of this Church. And so our all-encompassing aim must be to be saturated with God- besotted by God- the King James would say- from Whom and through Whom and to Whom are all things, to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

So as we begin Chapter 15- we see Jesus causing yet another controversy, causing yet another theological problem, and disturbing yet another meal. But that's not all He is doing. He is also seeking and saving that which was lost.

Amen. Let's Pray