

“Search & Rescue” – Luke 15

Argyle Road Baptist Church ~ May 3, 2026

God's SEARCH is Personal – Our RESCUE is Celebrated

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-10 (NIV)

15 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. ² This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

³ So Jesus told them this story: ⁴ “If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. ⁶ When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!

⁸ “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins^a and loses one. Won’t she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰ In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels when even one sinner repents.”

Parable of the Lost Son

Thank you for the invitation to share from God’s Word this morning. Pastor Ryan and I first met at Canadian Bible College. We were star athletes on the soccer team together last century. It is always great to reconnect and see how God continues to write our stories.

I was a pastor for 19 years before taking on a new role serving churches and ministries across Canada with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association based out of our Canadian headquarters in Calgary. Our mandate is to **share** the good news of Jesus and **equip** others to do the same. Today, you will get a small glimpse into why this really resonates with me.

As many of you are aware, Will Graham (the grandson of Billy Graham) is coming to Regina on June 12 & 13 for the Look Up Celebration. We have been hosting various events, prayer meetings, and training courses in preparation for this upcoming weekend. Yesterday, we hosted a family fun outreach event called KidzFest. The Look Up Celebration will be held at the Brandt Centre. On Friday night and again on Saturday afternoon, we will have talented artists sharing a message of hope through their music. Then Will Graham will share a clear and compelling message about how God desires to have a personal relationship with us. At the end of his message, he will invite everyone to make a decision to follow Jesus. Everyone who responds will have the opportunity to talk with someone and we will ensure they get connected with a local church.

As you see the billboards and hear the advertising all over the city, let me encourage you to be praying for God to give you the opportunity to invite a friend or neighbour to come with you to the Celebration. If you are wondering how to ask, let me give you a suggestion as to how you can make the invitation to your friends. Perhaps say something like this:

“Have you heard about this big event at the Brandt Centre? As you know, I am a Christian and at this event the speaker is going to share about who Jesus is. If you are curious about what being a Christian is all about and how God makes a difference in my life, I would love to have you join me.”



SEARCH AND RESCUE...

LUKE 15



Have you noticed how much we love stories about rescues? Movies or Real Life. How many remember the miners that were trapped in Chile in 2010. 33 men were trapped underground for 69 days before they were miraculously extracted alive.

Or in 2018 when a youth soccer team was trapped in a cave in Thailand after flooding blocked their way out. 17 days later, special divers heroically got them out.

Even though we had no personal connection, some of us even remember praying for them to be saved, and felt some emotions hit us when we heard the good news.

MY own story growing up in a single mother household. My mom got us three kids out of an abusive marriage and started a new life in a new city. We moved into subsidized housing, living on welfare, while my mom went back to school to pursue her high school education and ultimately an accounting degree. It was not easy making ends meet. We were fortunate to have social systems like the food bank to help us survive. But most importantly, we had a church family that always gave us a ride to church and helped meet our basic needs when we were in situations that were beyond us. We experienced the beauty of what a church family is.

Now let me flip the script. Have you ever been in a situation when you were in need of rescue? Have you ever experienced being lost? What feelings hit you?

Or have you ever desperately searched for something that was lost?

- ✓ Desperation of searching for a lost child
- ✓ My son William hiding in store clothes racks

LUKE 15 is the “LOST” chapter of the Bible.

In this chapter, Jesus uses 3 stories to show us how the story of our lives are touched by God’s story.

During our Scripture reading, we read LUKE 15:1-10. Let's continue in verse 11.

¹¹ To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. ¹² The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

¹³ "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴ About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵ He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"

God's search is personal

**Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep
and loses one...**

**Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins
and loses one...**

**Jesus continued, "There was a man who
had two sons..."**

We will pick up the rest of the story later. Here is what we discover...

3 things were lost: a Sheep, a Coin, a Son.

Something extremely valuable, of great worth is lost.

3 personal searchers: a Shepherd, a Woman, a Father.

Search was so important that it interrupts everything and is given full attention.

3 celebrations take place when the lost is found.

Great rejoicing ensues when the relationship is restored.

When Jesus tells stories, it is helpful to look at the context to get a better understanding as to why he is telling the particular story.

The CONTEXT:

15 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. ² This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

³ So Jesus told them this story.

The religious leaders (Pharisees & teachers of the law) isolated sinners as bad people not to be associated with. Who are these “sinners” in this context? The religious leaders labelled anyone who did not follow the Jewish religious rules as sinners. As well as those who had adopted the way of life of the Roman occupiers (especially those who helped the Romans like the tax collectors did)

Here is a helpful way I describe sin. When you spell the word SIN, the letter “I” is at the centre. And sin is when we live our lives with “I” at the centre, instead of living our lives for God. So by this definition, guess who is a sinner? Every one of us. Every person you meet, including the people in this room. However, our sins, our past, our shame, our stories do not have to define us. In fact, the great news is that our sins can be forgiven simply by asking the one who has the power to rescue us from the power of sin in our lives.

Should we, like the religious leaders, avoid sinners? Jesus challenges this belief when he tells these 3 stories. He argues that they people are missing the heart of God.

Jesus demonstrates that ***sinners are separated from a treasured relationship***
As a result, ***sinners are lost people that are meant to be pursued, not avoided***

God’s SEARCH:

As followers of Jesus, we should have the same perspective.

Our Motivation for Evangelism (the fancy church word for sharing the good news of Jesus with others) comes from understanding the Heart of God.

What is God’s heart like? Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

Matthew 9:36 *“When Jesus saw the crowds, he had **compassion** on them, because they were helpless like sheep without a shepherd.”*

So How does God pursue us? How did God pursue you? God’s SEARCH is Personal.

God’s pursuit of us is based on who He is.

So if we want to be God’s hands and feet joining him on his rescue mission, we have to know God’s heart. When we embrace God’s heart for the lost, everything changes.

It is powerful when our hearts resonate with the heart of God.

Let's return to the story and discover more of God's heart.

The LOVE of the FATHER:

²⁰ "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹ His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'²⁰

²² "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³ And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.



We often focus on the prodigal son in this story, but did you catch the way the father shows his relentless love for his son? Do we understand the desperation of the Father for a restored relationship?

This became real to me as a young dad. When my daughter Asia was 14 months old, I went away for two weeks on a mission trip to Niger. As you can imagine, on the long flight home all I could think about was giving my little girl a huge embrace. When I landed at the Calgary airport and got through immigration, I walked through the doors and saw her. As I went to her, instead of reaching out her arms to me, she turned away and hid her face from me. It was heart-breaking. I desperately wanted her to return the love I had for her.

God pursues each and every one of us with his love.

Romans 5:8 *“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he sent his Son...”*

Have you experienced the LOVE of the FATHER? For some of us, this is our story of how God has pursued us.



The GRACE of the SON

Another way God pursues us is with his amazing grace.

One of the best examples of this in the Bible is found in the life of Saul. He was a powerful Jewish religious leader that in his effort to defend proper worship of God, persecuted followers of Jesus. He had them arrested, thrown in jail, and even executed. But in Acts 9 on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, Saul encounters Jesus.

Leighton Ford, who was Billy Graham's brother-in-law and served alongside him, says this about what happened to Saul on that road (in his book, *"The Power of Story"*).

“Saul was struck blind by the light of grace. He was no longer able to see the world as he once did. For three days, Saul was sightless — and then God opened his eyes and gave him a new Vision. It was a Vision of the grace of Jesus, and that Vision exploded Saul's soul and transformed his life. No longer was he, Saul the hardened Pharisee. His character was transformed, so that he became Paul, the Christian apostle, the missionary of grace”.

Near the end of his ministry, Paul shares what his whole purpose in life is:

Acts 20:24 “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”

When I was a young pastor, just starting out in my first church, I experienced the weight of shame from my past and felt like I was disqualified from being a pastor. As I was driving back to Regina late at night in my 1988 Reliant K car, the enemy brought to mind things in my past that I was not proud of. This led to thoughts of resigning from my role as a youth pastor. I finally started to pray and in a powerful way experienced the grace of Jesus break through in that dark moment. The Lord brought to mind this promise from Jesus. **John 8:36** “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

We all have a past. Our shame, mistakes and regrets can torment us. Have you experienced the GRACE and FORGIVENESS and FREEDOM of Jesus? Good news is that there is nothing that disqualifies you from receiving this gift.



The FELLOWSHIP of the HOLY SPIRIT

Another way that God pursues us is by showing us his touch in a very personal way. In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul describes how we can know God. His prayer is that the church would experience the amazing grace of Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God the Father, the *intimate friendship* of the Holy Spirit.

This is my story, and perhaps you can testify to it being yours as well. God has intervened in undeniable ways all throughout my life.

One way in particular spoke to my identity growing up without a father in my life. I really struggled in my teenage years as I wrestled with seeing guys around me with fathers to look

up to and learn life from, while I often felt like I was missing out. One of the honest questions I regularly asked God was, "Why did you make me without a dad?"

One Sunday night, while I was sitting in the pew at church, I expressed this again to God. But this time, instead of this heart cry seemingly falling on deaf ears, God answered by speaking into my heart. He brought to mind all the men in my life who had actually been there for me. And then he told me in a gentle kind way, that he made me special. This absolutely wrecked me. I had never felt special. This changed everything for me.

If you are here today and have never experienced God showing who he is to you, ask him to show you if he is real. God loves to answer that honest prayer. He is not afraid of our prayers.

As we reflect on these stories in Luke 15, here is what I hope you take away...

Our rescue is celebrated

There will be more *rejoicing* in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

There is *rejoicing* in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

**"Let's have a feast and *celebrate* for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; He was lost and is found."
So they began to *celebrate*.**

Our RESCUE:

In each of these stories, there is great JOY of a restored relationship.

Let me tell you the rest of the story about returning home to my daughter. After leaving the airport, we stopped at my wife's parents' place. As we sat in the living room, Asia kept her distance. Finally, she toddled over to the fireplace where there was a box of kid's books and picked one out. Then she walked over to where I was sitting on floor, handed me the book, and sat in my lap. My heart leapt as I read that book and cuddled my child. There is nothing more wonderful than experiencing a reconciled relationship with one you love.

These three stories in Luke 15 remind us to celebrate that He's our rescuer!



SEARCH AND RESCUE...

GOD'S SEARCH IS PERSONAL

OUR RESCUE IS CELEBRATED



Life Preservers

So what? Now what? As we conclude, we are going to talk to God about how we can live this out. If you are here this morning, and you are exploring faith in God, challenge you to pray a simple PRAYER: “God, if you are real, would you show me how you have been pursuing me?” I know God loves to answer sincere prayers like this. If you cannot point to a moment when you have received God’s love, We would love to introduce you to Jesus this morning, and receive his love and forgiveness. Pastor Ryan or myself would love to talk with you after the service.

If you already have received God’s free gift of salvation, let’s not keep this good news to ourselves. A great symbol of “search and rescue” is a life preserver, but we don’t live near an ocean. If you get an email from someone trying to sell you oceanfront property in Saskatchewan, it’s a scam! ☹️ However, there is another symbol in the shape of life preservers that you can find all over Regina... DONUTS! – Every time you go for coffee, and see a donut, perhaps this is a great reminder that there are people in our lives that God wants to rescue.

Allow me to lead us in a closing prayer: Father, would you bring to our minds right now a person in my life that needs to know you? We are available to be used by you. Holy Spirit would you show us how we can show and share your love to this person?



**THE AMAZING GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST,
THE EXTRAVAGANT LOVE OF GOD, THE
INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,
BE WITH ALL OF YOU.**

2 COR 13:14



CONCLUSION:

God pursues us with all that he is!

Paul's prayer for the church in Corinth is my prayer for Argyle Road Baptist Church

May you know...

the amazing grace of Jesus Christ,
the extravagant love of God the Father,
the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit.