

Matthew 18:11-14

Why Jesus Came

December 22, 2019 – Rev. Rick Lyon

Intro - Christmas is just three days away. Normally, on the Sunday before Christmas, we look at one of the traditional Christmas passages. But, with God's perfect timing, the passage we come to this morning in our study of the gospel of Matthew is a Christmas passage. It deals with why Christ came.

Matthew 18:11 - For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, doesn't he leave the 99 and go to the mountains to seek the one that's straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the 99 that didn't go astray. Even so it's not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

1. Jesus Came To Save The Lost

Philippians 2:6-8 - Though He was God... He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant He humbled Himself and died a criminal's death on a cross.

The Bible says:

- **He was despised and rejected**
- **He came to His own and His own didn't receive Him**
- **The religious leaders said He was demon possessed**
- **Others said He was crazy**

Isaiah 53:6 - All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way.

2. Jesus Continues To Seek The Lost.

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v.12 - “What do you think? If a man has 100 sheep, and one of them goes astray, doesn't he leave the 99 and go to the mountains to seek the one that's straying?”

God takes the initiative to seek the lost.

Author Ann Lamont: “I didn't mean to be a Christian. I've been very clear about that. My first words upon encountering the presence of Jesus for the first time 12 years ago, were, “I'd rather die.” I really would've rather died at that point than to have my wonderful brilliant... non-believer friends know that I'd begun to love Jesus...”

But I never felt like I had much choice with Jesus; He was relentless. I didn't experience Him so much as the hound of heaven, as the old description has it, as the alley cat of heaven, who seemed to believe that if it just keeps showing up... you'd eventually open up... I resisted as long as I could... But He wore me out. He won.

I was tired and vulnerable and he won. I let him in... Then, when I was dozing, tiny kitten that I was, he picked me up like a mother cat, by the scruff of my neck, and deposited me in a little church... That's where I was when I came to. And then I came to believe.”

Romans 10:20 - God says, "I was found by those who didn't seek Me."

If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, doesn't he leave the 99 and go to the mountains to seek the one that's straying?

There's a song in our hymnbook called *Come Thou Fount*, that was written by Robert Robinson.

When Robert was just a small boy when his father died. In 18th century England, there was little in the way of a social welfare system and this meant Robert had to go to work while still very young. Without a father to guide and steady him, Robert fell in with bad companions.

One day his gang of rowdies harassed a drunken gypsy. Pouring liquor into her, they demanded she tell their fortunes for free. The drunken oracle told Robinson that he'd live to see his children and grandchildren. Robert was shaken by this encounter. The thought of having a life full of family and a future compelled him to journey away from his “gang of notorious hoodlums and his debauched life.”

Soon after this encounter, Robert decided to go and hear evangelist George Whitefield preach. In order to get his friends to join him, he invited them to

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accompany him in heckling the famous preacher. He and his friends got more than they bargained for when Whitefield delivered a terrifying message from Matthew 3, warning his hearers to ***“flee the wrath of God to come.”***

As the bellowing voice of Whitefield filled the air, Robinson’s soul was struck with terror. ***For the next 3 years,*** Robinson struggled with God until he finally surrendered. Two years after his conversion, Robinson penned “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” The song became an instant hit... And Robinson became something of a Christian celebrity.

But, two lines of the song, proved to be prophetic: ***“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love.”*** Robert wandered far away from God...

Years later, Robinson was riding in a stagecoach sitting across from two women, when one of them began to sing his song.

*O to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.*

The woman said, "Isn't that the most beautiful song you've ever heard?" Robinson’s eyes filled with tears and he replied, ***“Madam, I'm the wretch that wrote that song many years ago, and I'd give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy what I had then.”*** The woman said, "What you wrote so long ago is still true."

**Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace
Streams of mercy, *never ceasing,*
Call for songs of loudest praise.**

**Hitherto Your love has blest me
You have brought me to this place.
And I know Your hand will bring me
Safely home by Thy good grace
*Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,***

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Interposed His precious blood;

3. Jesus Celebrates Over The Found.

Luke 15 - “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, doesn't leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, *rejoicing*. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I've found my sheep which was lost!’ I say to you that likewise there will be *more joy* in heaven over one sinner who repents...”

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, doesn't light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I've found the piece which I lost!’

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Then He said: “A certain man had two sons...”

Philip Yancey:

***Why did I leave?* she says to herself, and pain stabs at her heart. She's sobbing, and she knows in a flash that more than anything else in the world she wants to go home. Three straight phone calls, three straight connections with the answering machine. She hangs up without leaving a message the first two times, but the third time she says, "Dad, Mom, it's me. I was wondering about coming home. I'm catching a bus up your way, and it'll get there about midnight tomorrow. If you're not there, well, I guess I'll just stay on the bus until it hits Canada."**

It takes about seven hours for a bus to make all the stops between Detroit and Traverse City, and during that time she realizes the flaws in her plan. What if her parents are out of town and miss the message? Shouldn't she have

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waited another day or so until she could talk to them? Even if they're home, they probably wrote her off as dead long ago. She should've given them some time to overcome the shock.

Her thoughts bounce back and forth between those worries and the speech she's preparing for her father. "Dad, I'm sorry. I know I was wrong. It's not your fault, it's all mine. Dad, can you forgive me?" She says the words over and over, her throat tightening even as she rehearses them. She hasn't apologized to anyone in years.

The bus has been driving with lights on since Bay City. Tiny snowflakes hit the road, and the asphalt steams. She's forgotten how dark it gets at night out here. A deer darts across the road and the bus swerves. Every so often, a billboard. A sign posting the mileage to Traverse City.

When the bus finally rolls into the station, the driver announces, "Fifteen minutes, folks. That's all we have here." Fifteen minutes to decide her life.

She walks into the terminal not knowing what to expect, and not one of the thousand scenes that have played out in her mind prepare her for what she sees. There, in the concrete-walls-and-plastic-chairs bus terminal in Traverse City, Michigan, stands a group of 40 family members—brothers and sisters and great-aunts and uncles and cousins and a grandmother and great-grandmother to boot. They're all wearing ridiculous-looking party hats and blowing noisemakers and taped across the entire wall of the terminal is a computer-generated banner that reads "Welcome home!"

Out of the crowd of well-wishers breaks her dad. She looks through tears and begins the memorized speech, "Dad, I'm sorry. I know ... "

He interrupts her. "Hush, child. We've no time for that. You'll be late for the party. A banquet's waiting for you at home."

And so it is with God's amazing grace... We're accustomed to finding a catch in every promise, but in Jesus' stories of extravagant grace there's no catch, no loophole disqualifying us from God's love. Jesus didn't give the parables to teach us how to live. He gave them, to correct our notions about who God is and who God loves. Ask people what they must do to get to heaven and most reply, "Be good." Jesus' stories contradict that answer. All we must do is cry, "Help!" God welcomes home anyone who'll have him and, in fact, has made the first move already.

Conclusion - God has made the first move--*now what will you do?*