

Luke 15:1-10

September 5, 2010 – 15th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Humble Love

‡ Welcomes sinners (vv.1-2)

‡ Seeks the lost afar (vv.3-7)

‡ Reclaims the lost at home (vv.8-10)

In the name of Jesus, the Friend of sinners, dearly redeemed children of the heavenly Father:

If you were listening to the radio with my “grandpa ears” and heard today’s sermon theme, you might think you heard, “Jungle Love.” All week the refrain has been pounding in my head: *“Jungle love it's drivin' me mad It's makin' me crazy. Jungle love it's drivin' me mad It's makin' me crazy.”*¹ Remember, the Steve Miller Band, 1977? Still around? Good music never dies; it just becomes a ring tone for your cell phone. Some words I won’t repeat, but two lines make the point about “Jungle Love”: *“You live in a world of illusion Where everything's peaches and cream. We all face a scarlet conclusion But we spend our time in a dream.”* Our culture ignores death. Meanwhile, it’s all about ME.

So sings Postmodern mentality with its closed box universe – no god outside and life like jungle grass on the inside. Evolved from slime, we live, we die, survival of the fittest – without hope – unless “Jungle Love” joins the New Age worldview to enter “the Force” in *Nirvana*. Fact is, Jesus’ lesson on **Humble Love** – Say that clearly! – **Humble Love** is as foreign now as then because **Humble Love**...

‡ Welcomes sinners (vv.1-2)

If you deny that there are such things or consider everyone else “*a sinner*,” **Humble Love** will only drive you mad and make you crazy. Here were the most religious people of the day, known as Pharisees and teachers of the law, mumbling under their breath at Jesus. “What’s wrong?” you ask? They’ll tell you: *“This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”* **Tax collectors** weren’t any more popular than IRS agents today. Even big government folks only want them to audit everyone else’s taxes. But there’s the double standard which cripples **Humble Love**. This is not political; it is spiritual. The most religious voices in America today insist on tolerance for every religion except the one that lifts high the cross of Jesus Christ as God’s Son our only Savior. To appreciate the fact that God **Welcomes sinners**, you would have to consider yourself a “*sinner*,” deserving only God’s wrath and punishment.

Isn’t it interesting how Jesus reaches out to His grumbling enemies? No warnings here of hell, or descriptions of the battle raging between good and evil, between the devil with his demons and the just and holy God. Other places in Scripture will tell those stories of objective truth and solemn warning. But here God’s Son is surrounded by many lost souls who admit their total lack of worthiness in God’s sight. Others want nothing to do with God or His Son. What to do? Tell a parable which hardens unbelief and **Welcomes sinners**. Jesus tells three parables in “Luke 15.” You heard the third one last Spring on the 4th Sunday in Lent², and if you were at our first worship service in Snail Lake School, 9/13/1987. Today we will look at only two. These earthly stories with heavenly meanings reveal the heart of God who...

‡ Seeks the lost afar (vv.3-7)

Lost is not just a popular TV show. **Lost** is where every soul would have spent eternity in torment except that *“the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) Jesus knows that if people could only understand the loving heart of God, they would go from feeling **lost** and being **lost** to being found in the strong arms of our heavenly Father who does not want to hurt, but longs to bless. He made us. He preserves us. God is so good and perfect that *“He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the*

¹ “Jungle Love,” song from the *Book of Dreams*, the tenth [album](#) by [American rock](#) band [The Steve Miller Band](#), (1977).

² S#1300 on Luke 22:7-20, preached at New Life on 3/14/10, referenced the Gospel Lesson from Luke 15:1-3,11-32.

good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:45–48 NIV)

God's Word is meant to take us out of the "world of illusion where everything's peaches and cream." God wants us to see Christ's "scarlet conclusion" on the cross, so that we don't "spend our time in a dream" which only gets worse for all eternity. So God makes it real. He brings us down to the "nitty gritty dirtballs" of life in order to pick us up from the ash heap of our own sin and shame.

All of us are like sheep who love to wander. You may have been raised in a Christian family, but a few years of college can get you gone from church and stuck in the rut of secular humanism. Oh, they preach tolerance, but then fall headlong into hypocrisy, judging everyone else by their personal opinions. They encourage wandering away into pathways unholy. But they're never there when the sorry soul wakes up with the pigs and realizes how much trouble he's in. Where is the comfort? Where is real peace for mind and heart when guilt grips your spirit, and life crashes down on your head?

We claim to be so independent, so individual, yet we end up following the same ruts as everyone else. We call them by different names, but selfish is where we land. Our words and actions, good things left undone, kind words left unsaid – sin balls up in our hide like mud on a wooly sheep. Some cool spot beckons where life is easy, where we can lie down, roll back and forth and really start to enjoy ourselves. Then suddenly, whoops! Your heavy wool pulls you over on your back. Kicking your feet won't help. We find out the hard way what it means to be a "cast" sheep. And if left like this with our belly to the sun, body and mind, soul and spirit will bake dead forever in very little time.

Now, aren't you glad God is good? He sent His Son to be our Good Shepherd. Jesus knows what it means to leave the ninety-nine self-righteous in the wilderness and search until He finds you – baking in the sun or shivering in the cold, but **lost** and dead without Him. "You silly sheep," He says, as His strong hands set you back on your feet. He'll hold you there until the blood comes back and you can rock steady. You don't mind what He's saying in such loving kindness and tender mercy: "Why did you wander off again? What am I going to do with you? Let's get you home." His warm brandy in your belly, and you start to understand why "*there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.*" **Humble Love** – Seeks the lost afar, but **Humble Love** is not done until it also...

‡ **Reclaims the lost at home (vv.8-10)**

She's not a rich rancher, this poor woman in her little peasant's hut. Her life savings amounts to ten days' wages, nothing more. And when one of ten coins is lost, you can understand why her poverty lights a little oil lamp and why she sweeps the entire dirt floor to find that one coin. But is this over the top? Would she really invite all her friends to celebrate finding that one coin? Maybe not in our culture where we "worship our work, work at our play, and play at our worship." But do you see Jesus' point?

It's **Humble Love** again that drives out the mad and only makes you crazy until it **Reclaims the lost at home**. God's heart wants all **the lost** reclaimed. And He wants us to share His heart by rejoicing like national champions when someone comes **home** to God. Sure! It's party time in heaven then! "*I tell you,*" Jesus says because no one else has been to heaven to let us know what really goes on there. "*I tell you,*" as God's own Son who sees all and knows all. "*I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*" Yes, the angels party down when you come **home** to God.

So can you see the **Humble Love** of God and where He wants to plant His **Humble Love** today? If you're weak and weary, worn down with sin and guilt, let that all be gone. Your Savior, God's own Son, died for you. He wants to plant His **Humble Love** in your heart to seek and reclaim **the lost**. Then all the songs will come together in heaven in lyrics known by all and never to be forgotten. **Humble Love** is driving us on. It's making us crazy until our rest is won. In Jesus' holy Name, Amen.