

(Series Info)

One Church, One Mission: Gathered for a Reason

Church can easily become something we attend, something we fit into the schedule, or something we evaluate by what we get out of it. But Jesus formed His Church to be a people united by the Gospel, growing together and carrying His mission into the world around them. The Church is God's Plan A to bring hope to the world. There is no Plan B.

In One Church / One Mission, we'll rediscover why we gather, why the one who is far from God still matters, how we grow into mature disciples, and what it means to live sent. At Mount Pleasant, that means we **Reach** not yet believers with the love of God. We **Raise** disciples who are becoming more like Jesus every day. We **Release** people to live boldly for Him right where they are.

This series is an invitation to see our place in that mission more clearly and take the next step God is calling us to take, right where we are.

(Personal Fun Facts)

Can you think of someone or some people in your life that once were very close to you but somehow disappeared from your world? What happened?

(Takeaways)

What was a major takeaway moment during the sermon this week?

(Big Idea)

Distance from God never diminishes someone's value to God.

(Discussion)

Scripture: Luke 15:1–2 People Were Comfortable Around Jesus

Jesus was close to people who were far from God. The religious leaders were disturbed by this because society's ill reputes were cozying up to Jesus on a regular basis. The religious elite complained that Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors. What sounds like an accusation, Luke turns into a mission statement. Let's be clear, Jesus did not affirm the lifestyles of everyone He ate with, but neither did He require people to clean themselves up before He came near them ... or they to Him. Jesus never allowed someone's distance from God to determine His distance from them.

- 1) What surprises you about the fact that people whose lives were far from God actually wanted to be around Jesus?
- 2) What might it say about us, the church, if people who are far from God never feel comfortable being around us?

Scripture: Luke 15:3–7 God Sees “the One”

The parable about the lost sheep is the story of having 99 out of 100 isn't good enough for the Good Shepherd. Thankfully, Jesus, our Shepherd, doesn't say, "Well, most of them are here ... that is good enough." No, He notices the "one" who is not. We see a lot of people in church during a weekend worship service, and it is easy to measure our effectiveness by attendance. But what about the ones you don't see? Who isn't here? The Shepherd's attention is drawn to the missing one.

- 3) How might our Life Group or church as a whole change if we became as concerned about who is missing as we are encouraged by who is present?

Scripture: Luke 15:8–10 Lost Doesn't Mean Worthless

"Lost" is a description of location—not value. You can be spiritually confused and still bear the image of God. You can make destructive choices and still matter greatly to God. You can reject God and still be pursued by Him. You can want nothing to do with the church, and even say mean things about church people, and yet still be deeply loved by God. Here, the lost coin parable teaches us that though the coin was lost, it didn't lose its value. It was worth searching for ... and so are people.

- 4) What kinds of people are easiest for Christians to stop seeing as valuable?

Scripture: Luke 15:11–24 While He Was Still Far Off...

“While he was still a long way off ...” Far away. In the distance ... the father saw him. The son had insulted his father and taken his inheritance early. Leaving the comfortable home he lived in, he went out and squandered all he had. Terrible decision after another terrible decision, he was as far as you could get. But, the father saw him. The father doesn’t see a problem walking down the road ... he sees his son. He doesn’t see a huge failure ... he sees his son. An embarrassment ... no, he sees his son.

- 5) What does the phrase “while he was still a long way off” tell us about the heart of the father/Father?

- 6) Why is it important to read that the father runs toward him?

- 7) What does the father do, in this story, before the son has an opportunity to prove that he has changed?
 - What does all this say about our Heavenly Father?

Closing Moments & Personal Application

If people matter to God, are valuable to Him, and are seen by Him, then, too, they should matter to us. Where do you regularly encounter people who may be far from God? What keeps us from developing genuine relationships with people who don’t yet know Jesus and share our faith? Does it change your heart to see someone as a person who is valued by God rather than seeing them as an evangelistic project?

Action Steps this Next Week

- Ask, “Who have I stopped seeing?”
- Write down the name of a person you have stopped seeing.
- This week, do one intentional thing to move toward the person whose name you wrote ... not to preach to them or invite them to church, but to move toward them.

Send a text, make a phone call, or invite them to coffee. Share stories. Just let them know **"I see you."**

- Share next week what you did to move closer to "this one."

Closing Prayer

Father, give us Your eyes. Show us the people we have stopped seeing. Break through the unintentional walls we have built around our lives. Teach us to see people not as projects but people You love. Give us courage this week to reach out and see someone ... across the street, a room, an office, or a driveway. When we encounter someone who is "a long way off," remind us that You already see them.

In Your name we pray, Amen.