

# The Heart Of God

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[ 0 : 00 ] Lord Jesus Christ, you told this parable many centuries ago, but we pray that your spirit would be here now to help us to understand it afresh for ourselves.

We ask this in your name. Amen. Well, if you want to keep a bit of the Bible open, please keep Luke 15, 11 to 32 open, because I'm going to be talking about that.

If you can't get to see a Bible, just lean over and push someone. It's great. It's an unusual thing, you know, to preach at your own induction, and I've never done it before.

I can tell you that I'd probably never do it again. And I do want to give my own welcome to Bill, Bill Stevens. It's lovely. I met him for the first time on Tuesday.

And Andrew, I think Andrew's at the back. Andrew is the regional dean. Oh! I hope he's a... Gosh! It's amazing what happens in a service, isn't it?

[ 1 : 06 ] People appear from all sorts of ends. And I think also I ought to give a special thank you for coming to all those who made it from the Parksville weekend. We'd just like to indicate if you made it from the Parksville weekend.

Well, that's terrific. You'll know who they are. They'll be the ones who'd be dropping off halfway through this sermon. Thank you for coming back yet again for more punishment. Don't go now. You know, it's a very, very funny feeling, being lost in a strange city. And Rachel and I have had this experience a few times.

And I think I've had it about five times. Once Harry left me somewhere in the vicinity of somewhere downtown. I really don't know where it is to this day.

And he said, I'll see you at the cathedral. Now, I'd seen a church vaguely in one direction, and I thought that must be the cathedral. Oh, it's a very foolish thing to think, really.

[ 2 : 10 ] So I headed in that direction, and I began to ask people, do you know where the cathedral is? It's always, I always seem to get the tourists, you know. I don't know what it is.

You know, I've just come to this country. Well, nobody knew where the cathedral was, which was very interesting. So I eventually had to go to the diocesan offices, and they told me where it was. And if they didn't know, well, that would have been terrible.

You see, it's a funny feeling being lost. Now, there are three losts in this chapter, Luke 15. There's a lost sheep. You know, the funny thing about sheep is they're always getting lost.

There's always a stupid sheep that goes off in the wrong direction. There's a lost coin. And I guess if we were to put that in our modern terminology, you know, darling, where did I put my checkbook or my credit card?

Have you seen it? Anywhere? We're always losing those kinds of things, aren't we? And there's also a lost son. And that's a bit, well, that's a bit of a sad situation, but there are always lost sons.

[ 3 : 21 ] That is, the black sheep of the family. There's always somebody who goes off and does things, and everybody's ashamed of them, and they never talk about that particular person in their family. And whether you're a lost sheep or whatever, you know the agony of losing things, and you know the agony of being lost.

Now, Jesus starts talking about the lost because of a major grumble. And that's the Pharisees and the scribes right at the very beginning of this chapter.

The tax collectors and sinners, in verse 1, were all drawing near to hear Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, this man receives sinners and eats with them.

And they're asking questions, where is his discernment? These people are sinners. Doesn't he realize that? What kind of example is he setting the youth group? I wouldn't let one of my daughters go anywhere near those kinds of people.

Does he have no sense of right or wrong or decency? Doesn't he know that if he gets into that kind of area, he'll defile himself? Remember the whole picture of defilement? People thought that when Jesus went amongst the sinners, he'd catch something.

[ 4 : 39 ] Instead, of course, he was going to give them something. And they say, Jesus, you're so naive. You really don't know what this world is about, do you? These people around you.

And in response, Jesus says these parables that in effect says, look, you religious people, you don't know what heaven is about, do you? You don't understand what heaven is about.

You see, if you knew what heaven was about, you'd understand why I'm with these people. If you understood what heaven was about, one of the word or word groups that seems to come up in this particular chapter very often is the word group around the word joy.

In fact, I believe that it's more in this chapter than in any other chapter in the New Testament. It's there, rejoice with me, in verse 6, and then verse 7, there's more joy in heaven.

That's a suggestive phrase. And then verse 10, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents. And then at verse 24, they began to make merry.

[ 5 : 50 ] They had a party. Heaven is about joy. There's joy in heaven. Now, there's a friend of mine I remember, and Tom Cooper remembers him too.

He's a good friend of his, Roger Simpson. He's an evangelist, and he was preaching and trying to get this point over that you know that heaven is a glorious place and that Christianity doesn't restrict you and squeeze the joy out of you, but as it were, squeezes it into you.

And as he finished preaching, a lady came up to him, and she looked incredibly miserable. And she said, Mr. Simpson, I don't want to become a Christian because I think it will ruin my life.

And he looked at her, and he laughed and said, Madam, you can't be more miserable than you are now. I don't know how he had the cheek to say it. But you see, there's joy in heaven.

But it's not just the fact that there's joy in heaven. It's what is it that makes them joyful? Well, what makes them joyful in heaven is the joy of finding what was lost.

[ 7 : 07 ] See, that's the perspective of heaven. That's what really gives them something. Oh, that makes them sort of leap in the air. You know, when Maradona scored that goal against England in the World Cup.

It wasn't a goal, really. But, you know, well, he scored two. And he was so excited, I think he ran over the hoardings. You know, it was that kind of joy. Well, that's the perspective of heaven, of finding what was lost.

When one sinner repents, they have a party. Now, I want to suggest that most people have lost the perspective of heaven.

Most of us have lost that perspective. And by the time we finish, I just hope we'll have caught it again, just a little bit of that perspective.

So let's look at the story and what happened. There were two kinds of listeners. There were the sinners, remember, and the Pharisees. And they're all listening to this story.

[ 8 : 08 ] And this particular beginning part really relates to those sinners. Jesus says, you know, there's a son that takes his share of the property.

And remember the crowd? They're listening and they say, a bit risky, that. And he goes off around the world and he squanders it on loose living. And they say, it's typical, really. Remember Mr. Cohen's son?

He did that. And he began to be in want. Inevitable, said the crowd. You know, it always happens, doesn't it? I mean, there's always somebody who gets like that.

And no one gave him anything. I'm not surprised. Doesn't deserve it. Tragic tale. But. Oh. What, said the crowd. But. But he came to himself.

And he wanted to go back to his father. And he was going to have this speech of repentance. And he just hoped that his father might possibly take him on as a hired servant.

[ 9 : 11 ] And the crowd say, well, I wonder. I wonder what kind of reaction he'll get when he comes back. I know. I know what he's going to get. You know. I told you so. I told you. If you left me. I told you it'd be like this.

I wonder what kind of reaction he's going to get. Now let's just put ourselves in the frame of the younger brother. Jonah. Because that may just be you.

You know, that's somebody who has had all that God had to give them. But then rather wandered away and said, I'm going to do it my way. And so they say, well, goodbye God.

I just want you to stay out of the way for the moment. I'm going to do it my way. And that it all gets messed up somehow. We were looking at Jonah on the weekend.

And Jonah's a terrific example of that. He wanted to flee from the presence of the Lord. You see, get away God. And he fled from the presence of the Lord. And where did he end up? Well, he ended up in a living hell.

[10:11] In the belly of this great fish. Now. The sun has gone away.

And he suddenly comes to his senses. And he begins to realize three things about himself. He never did do God's will.

And he never really could do God's will. And he never really wanted to do God's will. And God really knows what he's really like now.

And God can see him. And he can see himself. It's utterly clear what he's really like. And the ways he's treated God. And he thinks, just like the crowd thought.

Well, I wonder how I'm going to be received. When you see such a person needs the perspective of heaven.

[11:14] If you're that kind of person. The father is a great surprise to you here. The son has this speech.

Father, I've sinned against heaven and before you. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. And can you imagine him walking along the road. And he's got his speech. Because he knows that once he gets anywhere near his father.

He's going to sort of stutter it and stumble. And he's going to mess it all up. So he's sort of saying it to himself. This is what I'm going to say. And he's saying it to him. And he's walking to him. And his father is out looking.

That's an extraordinary first start. And his father, this compassion, this spalagnitz, I remember that word, wells up within the father. And the father runs to him.

Now could you picture that? Remember the father would be wearing something about this length. And it's not really very good for running in. And if you want to run in these things, it'll be a liturgical disaster.

[12:16] Because you've really got to hitch it up like this. Okay? And that's the way the father must have run. And fathers would never have done that. But they were far too dignified to do that.

But this father, oh no, he's so excited, hitched it all up and ran and embraced him and gave him that kiss of forgiveness. And the son starts to blurt out the message.

You know the message? Father, I've sinned against heaven and before you. And I know that. Okay, right. It's great. It's great to see you back. And the son can't quite believe this reaction from the father.

Well, you have me back? Not as one of your hired servants? And then let's put the ring on him and put the sandals on the feet and we're going to have a terrific party. For me?

You know, let me just put this clearly. If you feel that you're an outside person and you wonder how God will treat you, may I say that God's not looking for reasons to keep you out of heaven.

[13:20] God is looking for reasons to get you into heaven. He's got plenty of reasons to keep you out. He wants to get you in and he'd do anything to get you in. And the rest of this gospel tells you what anything means.

That Christ himself is prepared to die to get you into heaven. That's the perspective of heaven for you if you're a younger brother or sister. That's great, isn't it?

But somebody else needed the perspective of heaven too and that's our friend the elder brother.

Let's have a little look at him. Now the elder son was in the field and he came and he drew near to the house and he heard the music and the dancing and he called one of the servants and said, Hey, what's going on here?

And the servant said, Your brother has come and your father's killed a fatted calf because he's received him safe and sound. And he needs the perspective of heaven because he is very angry. What's going on here? Why is the father doing this? I just don't understand it. Doesn't he know what that son has been doing with himself and with that money?

[14:42] Doesn't he realize that? Doesn't he realize the desperate past of that? Well, he calls him that son of yours later on. Gosh.

And why all the fuss for that outsider? Look. Look. You know, and he gets into conversation with the father because the father comes out, you see. He says, Look, hang on a minute.

Don't you realize that he's just come back and I've been here longest? And because I've been here longest, I should have the say, shouldn't I? I should say how things are.

Let's just transpose that into modern terminology. Let me change the words a bit in verse 28. This happened in England. The choir were angry and refused to go in and the vicar came out and entreated them.

But the choir said, Look, we've been here many years. Why are you doing all this modern stuff? But we could switch that around, couldn't we? And the young people refused to go to the service, you see, because they're singing all that old stuff.

[15:47] Standing on your rights. Because we treat the church like a club. That's what the eldest brother was doing. He's treating it as a club. And of course, if you've been in the club the longest, then you have the head table.

So this week we went to a very special club in Vancouver. Very nice. And of course, I'd never, ever been there before.

And Rachel and I, we were taken by some lovely people. And they were obviously members there, but we were brand new. And we crept in. And everybody was there.

It seemed everybody who was anybody was at this club. The chap in charge of the British consulate was there. And I went round the back, and we sat at a table at the back somewhere.

And of course, I was, I mean, nobody came and talked to me, because I was new. And that's what a club is like, and you wouldn't expect anything else. But that's not what the church should be like.

[16:48] And you know that very famous quote of Archbishop Temple, who says that the church is the only club or institution that exists for the benefit of its non-members.

Its non-members. Now, I'm not saying we should change the way we do the services necessarily, or change the singing or anything like that.

It's not to do with the style. It's not to do with the kind of technological change or anything like that.

It's about a perspective. The perspective of heaven. It's the heart of the father for the outsider.

The heart of the father for the lost person. He longs for that lost person. Now, he works on the elder brother, and you can read it yourself if you want to, but I love the way that the elder brother says, this son of yours.

I haven't, I'm not old enough yet for people to say that about my children, but eventually I'm sure it will come. That son of yours. But the father says, verse 32.

[18:06] Verse 32, that's right. This brother of yours. See, that's what he is. He's a brother. Look at him like that. And try and catch my perspective, says the father.

He was dead, you know. Now he's alive. He's repented. He's come back. He was lost, you know. He was miles away. But now he's found.

And that attitude, as I said, springs out of compassion. So let me conclude with a word for younger brothers and sisters, as it were, and people who fall into the older brother or sister category.

First of all, a word for the younger brothers or sisters. Maybe you've realized, even for the first time, that you're a long, long way from God, and that you've treated him very badly, and that you want to come back.

And you're thinking to yourself, well, look, will he have me? He knows what I'm really like. He knows I've ignored him, and used him, and taken him for granted, and all the rest of it. Will he have me back?

[19:26] Yes. He will. He's looking for you. He's longing for you. And if you're just such a person, I've got a booklet for you later. Come and grab it off me, and it'll show you, very simply, how that connection can take place between you and the Father.

But what if you feel you're an elder brother? This is a tendency, you see, that's in all of us. Well, look at the Father.

He's outlooking, and he has compassion. And my suggestion is this, that we need to regain our perspective, the heavenly perspective for the lost people, and that we need to be outlooking in the same sense.

We need to be with people who don't come to church. And then he ran to meet him. We mustn't be afraid to look foolish. And let's do all kinds of things, with a bit of prayerful imagination, men's breakfast, agnostics, anonymous, and dinners, and all kinds of things, to enable people to hear what the Father has to say.

But maybe do one special thing. Pray this week that you might be able to speak to one person about Jesus Christ.

[ 20 : 51 ] Pray that you may have an opportunity to do that. And as you do that, you know this joy of heaven will come down to earth, and you'll begin to start to get the feel of the sorts of things that heaven gets really excited about.

Well, that ends our series on the heart of God. The shepherd wants to teach the sheep. We looked at that three weeks ago. And then last week, we looked at the Good Samaritan, crossing the barriers, and now the heart for the lost.

And wouldn't it be great if it was said of our church as it was said of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse two, this church receives sinners and eats with them.

This church, this person, receives sinners and eats with them. Amen.

We're going to sing now from our blue hymn books, and Harry's going to tell us the number. The number is 173, and this is going to be our offertory hymn.

[ 22 : 12 ] So if you'd like to make your offering during this hymn, hymn 173. right. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I am sweet of the love and glory of the Christ who died for me.

I'll repent the world of glory for the cross of Calvary.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous glory of the Christ who died for me.

Sing it with the saints in glory, gathered by the crystal sea.

[ 23 : 33 ] I was born for Jesus, found me, found the sheep and with the strength.

Wend me out and gently led me back into the narrow way.

May I say the wondrous glory of the Christ who died for me.

Sing it with the saints in glory, gathered by the crystal sea.

Sing it with the saints in glory, is Thy glory Sing it In His saints In glory Gathered by The Christmas tree In the mountains

[ 25 : 28 ] Still they keep me For all that I am all fainted But in presence Still is with me Thy is riding And I play Let us sing The wondrous story Of the Christ To Thy glory Sing it With the saints In glory Gathered by The Christmas tree The light And the

I shall be. Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story of the Christ who died for me.

Sing it with his saints in glory gathers by the crystal sea.

Now, will you please remain standing? Your support for Stephen on this occasion and for his ministry in this parish will be of the utmost importance to him.

And will you please turn to page two in this blue booklet. We have come together today to welcome Stephen who has been chosen to serve as assistant curate at St. John's.

[ 27 : 45 ] We believe that he is well qualified and that he has been prayerfully and lawfully selected. Stephen, will you now please read these declarations and oaths?

I, Stephen Lynn James, having been licensed to perform the office of assistant priest, parish of St. John's, Shaughnessy, in the Diocese of New Westminster, to solemnly make the following declaration.

I assent to the 39 articles of religion and to the Book of Common Prayer and of the ordering of bishops, priests and deacons. I believe the doctrine of the Anglican Church of Canada as therein set forth, to be agreeable to the Word of God and in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use the form in the said book prescribed, and none other except so far as shall be ordered by lawful authority.

The above declaration was made and subscribed by the above names, that's myself, Stephen Lynn James, in our presence on the 15th day of January in the year of our Lord, 1989.

Secondly, the oath of canonical obedience. I, Stephen Lynn James, do swear that I will pay true and canonical obedience to the Lord Bishop of New Westminster and his successors in all things lawful and honest.

[ 29 : 25 ] So help me God. The declaration of submission. I, Stephen Lynn James, do willingly subscribe to and declare that I have sent to and abide by the Constitution rules of order and canons which have been or shall be from time to time passed by the General Synod, the Provincial Synod and the Diocese of New Westminster.

On behalf of the Archbishop, I now read this license. Diocese of New Westminster, Douglas by Divine Providence, Archbishop of New Westminster, to our beloved in Christ, Stephen Lynn James.

We do by these presents give and grant unto you in whose fidelity, morals, learning, sound doctrine and diligence we fully confide our license and authority to perform the office of assistant priest, parish of St. John Shaughnessy within our diocese and jurisdiction in preaching the word of God, in reading the common prayers, in ministering the holy sacrament and in performing all other ecclesiastical duties belonging to the said office according to the form prescribed and used by the Anglican Church of Canada in that behalf lawfully established and promulgated and not otherwise or in any other manner, you having first before us taken the oath and made the subscribed declaration which in this case are required to be subscribed, made and taken, and hereby reserving ourselves and our successors, bishops of New Westminster, full power and authority to revoke these presents and all things herein contained, whatsoever we shall see just cause to do so. In witness whereof we have caused our seal to be effected, dated the 16th day of January in the year of our Lord, 1989, in the 20th year of our consecration and of our translation, the 9th, registered at Vancouver on the 16th day of January, 1989.

Stephen, do you in the presence of this congregation commit yourself to this new trust and ministry? I do. Stephen, obey these canons and be among us to share in the ministry of the diocese.

[ 32 : 20 ] With God's help, I will. Will you, who witnessed this new beginning, support and uphold Stephen in this ministry?

With God's help, we will. Friend, our brother Stephen has come to take his place as a curate in the ministry of this parish. I ask you to join in prayer to God for the world, for this congregation and for Stephen that he will be given the grace to fulfill his ministry in this place.

for just a few moments we will pray silently.

in this morning. I approach nothing to mention in this parish and my feet are in this church.

For Stephen, chosen minister in your church, we pray to you, O Lord, that he may faithfully fulfill the duties of this ministry and by rightly handling the word of truth, build up your church and glorify your name, we pray to you, O Lord, that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit he may be sustained and encouraged to persevere to the end, we pray to you, O Lord, for his family, Rachel, Jonathan, Bethan, and Claire, that they may be adorned with all Christian virtues, we pray to you, O Lord.

[ 34 : 43 ] For the mission of the church, that in faithful witness it may preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, we pray to you, O Lord. For those who do not yet believe, and for those who have lost their faith, that they may receive the light of the gospel, we pray to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer. For your blessing upon all human labor, and for the right use of the riches of creation, that the world may be freed from poverty, famine, and disaster, we pray to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer. For our prayer. For ourselves. For the forgiveness of our sins, and for the grace of the Holy Spirit to amend our lives, we pray to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer. Rejoicing in the fellowship of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, and one to another, and all our life, to Christ our God.

To you, O Lord. Amen. Please stand. The Lord be with you.

[ 36 : 04 ] And with you. Ever-living God, strengthen and sustain Stephen, that with patience and understanding he may love and care for your people, and grant that together they may follow Jesus Christ, offering to you their lives in his service, through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Stephen, I induct you as assistant curate of this parish of St. John's.

People of St. John's, I present Stephen as your new assistant curate. Stephen, we welcome you as our new assistant, as we all seek to serve God in this place.

And with you, we also welcome Rachel, Jonathan, Bethan, and Claire into this parish community.

applause and will you stand and share the piece one with another and will you my happy duty to ask you to sit down it's a great feeling being legal we're going to sing another song now

I think it's number 7 on your white sheets and in case you don't know it I'll just run over the chorus whether band or singers come out and join me sorry we have learnt this before but it's lovely if we can all grab hold of the tune because it really does lift the roof a little the verse goes like this singers Lord the light of your love is shining in the midst of the darkness shining Jesus light of the world shine upon us set us free by the truth you now bring us shine on me shine on me and the verse chorus shine Jesus shine fill this land with the Father's glory blaze spirit blaze set our hearts on fire same again flow river flow flood the nations with grace and mercy send forth your word

[ 40 : 33 ] Lord and let there be light do you think you've got it? yes you have well why don't we stand and sing a song Lord the light of your love is shining in the midst of the darkness shining Jesus light of the world shine upon us set us free by the truth you now bring us shine on me shine on me shine Jesus shine fill this land with the Father's glory blaze spirit blaze set our hearts on fire blow river flow flood the nations with grace and mercy send forth your word

Lord and let there be light Lord I come to your awesome praise from the shadows into your radiance from the shadows into your radiance by your blood I may enter your brightness search me try me consume all my darkness shine on me shine on me shine on me shine Jesus shine shine fill this land with the Father's glory blaze spirit blaze set our hearts on fire blow river flow flood the nations with grace and mercy send forth your word

Lord and let there be light light as we gaze on your kingly brightness so our faces display your likeness ever changing from glory to glory Lord and let there be light we are changing from glory we are here may our lives tell your story shine on me shine on me shine on me shine on me shine Jesus shine fill this land with the Father's glory blaze spirit blaze blaze blaze■ blast off the page mode o each finally Christ bless you Lord and there be light beatphy Wow I become to your children on me and it repair

Ignition more year gö■dio Fill this land with the Father's glory.

Blaze, Spirit, praise. Set our hearts afar. Blow, river flow.

[ 44 : 08 ] Flap the nations with grace and mercy. Send forth your word, Lord, and let them be light.

Amen. And will you kneel again? And we just want to pray as the service concludes.

We thank you, O God, for those whom you have called through the centuries to serve in the ministry of your church. Amen.