

Needy for Jesus: The Least, Lost and Lonely

Introduction

Her name was Rahab. She was a prostitute. God saved her from a certain death in a city on the verge of being invaded by the army of Israel ([Joshua 2:10-13, 6:22-25](#)). His name was Zacchaeus. He was a wealthy man, a chief tax collector, who defrauded people of their money ([Luke 19:1-10](#)). Jesus visited Zacchaeus, a man probably despised by many, and yet turned his life upside-down. Saul, later to be Paul, watched in approval as a young man was stoned to death for his trust in Jesus ([Acts 7:58-8:1](#)). Later, this same Paul, a Christian-hater, would be an ambassador for Christ to share the gospel with the very people he had hated.

What do Rahab, Zacchaeus and the apostle Paul have in common? They were the least, the lost and the lonely. They were people needy for Jesus, just like you and me. And God doesn't give up on people needy for Jesus. No matter what, He still rescues through His perfect, gracious, merciful, liberating love. He bids us run to Him and live.

Who are the least, the lost and the lonely? We often believe they're "those other people". In our present day, they're the ones who sleep in a cardboard box under a bridge. They're the ones who never seem to be able to make it in this world. They're the ones who live in run-down neighborhoods or are relegated to health care facilities. They're the ones somebody else needs to take care of because we certainly don't want to do it. But in reality, they're not "those other people." They're us. We're them.

Yes, we need to see ourselves as one of the least, the lost and the lonely. We're either now or have been in one or all of those categories, whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual. In fact, the truth of the matter is that we're all one of the least because we're all spiritual beggars and paupers. As descendants of Adam, we're all born spiritually lost, separated from God. We're either now or have been spiritually lonely, constantly searching for something or someone to fill our loneliness.

Even the apostle Paul, a zealous Pharisee and learned man, spoke of himself as one of the sons of disobedience, following the course of this world and a child of wrath like the rest of mankind. That was before God in Christ changed his life ([Ephesians 2:1-7](#)). And when God changes a person's life, he or she is transformed forever. In Christ, the least are welcomed; the lost are found and the lonely are loved. That's the good news message of the gospel.

Yes, the good news message of the gospel is that Jesus makes the difference in the lives of the emotional, physical and spiritual misfits, don't-wanters, outcasts and losers. So, there's three (3) points we are in dire need of paying close attention to. Those three (3) points are that the least, the lost and the lonely are:

- Loved by Jesus
- Liberated by Jesus
- Needy for Jesus

But before we begin to look at these three (3) main points, let's take a moment to apprehend what God says in His Word about the souls of man being needy for perfect loving and liberation, which is only found in Jesus.

Jesus: God's Chosen Servant

Notice in the first portion of the text, [Isaiah 42:1](#), God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write of Jesus, His chosen servant (also reference [Matthew 12:18-21](#)).

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.

[Isaiah 42:1](#) (ESV)

There is no doubt according to the text ([Isaiah 42:1-7](#) and [Matthew 12:18-21](#)) that only Jesus, God's beloved Son, is His chosen servant to uphold, to delight in, to be the One whom the Holy Spirit exalts and to be the One who is righteous and just. Only Jesus is the One in whom all the promises of God find their "Yes". He is the Supreme Treasure to delight in because in Him dwells the fullness of love, compassion, grace and mercy. No other One but Jesus loves so deeply and liberates so fully people like you and me from their sins for all eternity. I'll say it again; that's the good news message of the cross, which brings us to our first point.

1. Loved By Jesus

The least, lost and lonely are loved by Jesus. We see that in [Isaiah 42:3](#).

a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

[Isaiah 42:3](#) (ESV)

A bruised reed is analogous with those who are weak and easily shaken. Yes, the Lord is tender and kind, not desiring to break what is already fragile, but to bind up the broken-hearted. A faintly burning wick is likened to those who need a spark to ignite a flame in their life and Christ is the oil of grace to do such. He does not desire to put out a faint flicker of hope, but be the catalyst for a brightly burning flame of faith. Don't think this applies only to the spiritual lost; it also applies to me and any of you who call me a brother in Christ.

Here we see the compassion, grace and mercy of the Lord. And He will always faithfully do what is just and right, no matter what. Take a look at [Isaiah 61:1](#), (also reference [Luke 4:18](#)), which describes Jesus as God's anointed One; the lover and liberator of the least, the lost and the lonely.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

[Isaiah 61:1](#) (ESV)

Charles Wesley, who wrote over 6,000 hymns, put into words the theme of [Isaiah 61:1](#) in the hymn titled "And Can It Be", which we sing from time to time at La Crescent Evangelical Free Church (LEFC).

**Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee...**

Yes, God is in the business of rescuing the least, the lost, and the lonely from the dark, dungeon of sin and misery and transferring the ones He rescues to the kingdom of His beloved Son ([Colossians 1:13](#)). In fact, Scripture is filled with examples of Jesus' love, compassion and tender-heartedness toward the lame, blind, deaf, lepers, beggars, prostitutes, prisoners and demon-possessed.

For example, perhaps you recall the story of Jesus cleansing a man with leprosy ([Luke 5:12-13](#)). The man said "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "**I will; be clean.**" And immediately the leprosy left him. Or how about the prostitute who wet Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, then poured ointment on his feet ([Luke 7:36-50](#)). Her sins, which were many, were forgiven by Jesus.

God wants us to take a long look at the leper and the prostitute. He wants us to see ourselves in them. People needy for the healing touch of Jesus. People needy for clinging to and crying at the feet of Jesus. People needy for new hope and a new life. That's who Jesus is for the least, the lost and the lonely. Here's what [Isaiah 53:4](#) says about that.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.
[Isaiah 53:4](#) (ESV)

Yes, God's love is so great that Jesus was crushed and afflicted by God to set needy people free from sin. Jesus took on sin and was punished and smitten by God for the sake of people needy for gospel-saturated grace, mercy and love. Because of His great love, the least, the lost and the lonely don't have to remain that way. He liberates completely, which brings us to point number two.

2. Liberated By Jesus

I'll say it again. The least, the lost and the lonely don't have to remain that way. The person who trusts Jesus, who receives Him by faith alone, through God's grace alone is liberated from the power of sin and death. Only Jesus can do that! And only Jesus can heal the lame, blind, deaf and lepers. Only Jesus can change the lives of beggars and prostitutes. Only Jesus can set the prisoners and demon-possessed free. Here's the text from [Isaiah 42:6-7](#), which points us to what [Isaiah 61:1](#) states of Jesus.

⁶ “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

[Isaiah 42:6-7](#) (ESV)

I grew up in North Carolina. My family would sometimes visit the Appalachian Mountains where there are caves. I remember being in a cave and it was like being in a dark dungeon. The darkness was miserably overwhelming. Eyes were completely blind to light. We depended upon a guide to lead us out of the cave; he would liberate us from the darkness. What I've just described is a snapshot of the sin-stained world we live in. The world is miserably dark to the gospel; many eyes are blind to the light of truth of our neediness for Jesus. But God has provided the preeminent liberator from the darkness of sin in His Son, Christ Jesus the Lord.

So, how is Jesus the liberator of sin? The answer is that He takes on our leastness, lostness and loneliness. Jesus, the One that knew no sin, took on sin, so that many would be welcomed by God ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). He became a curse when He hung on the cross so that many lost sinners would be found ([Galatians 3:13](#)). He bore the load of shame and disgrace in His body on the cross. His ugly wounds provide beautiful healing for the sickness of sin. ([1 Peter 2:24](#)).

Remember earlier in this message we talked about the fact that Jesus' love is compassionate and tender-hearted ([Isaiah 42:3](#)). As a result, the text stated that Jesus will not break a bruised reed or quench a faintly burning wick. Because of God's great love, liberation from sin was perfectly accomplished in Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. Jesus was bruised and crushed by God. Jesus' life was quenched by God so that sin's dark stain is cleansed by Christ's blood. Here's [Isaiah 53:5-6,10a](#).

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

[Isaiah 53:5-6](#) (ESV)

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief;

[Isaiah 53:10a](#) (ESV)

3. Needy for Jesus

The text ([Isaiah 42:1-7](#)) is all about being needy for Jesus. In fact, the entire Bible is God's incredible story of mankind's neediness to be rescued, restored and reconciled through Jesus. If it weren't for the Lord Jesus being God's chosen servant, as well as the suffering servant, there would be no loving and liberating the souls of man from sin. Characters in the Bible such as Rahab, Zacchaeus, and the apostle Paul could all relate as being needy for Jesus.

Take for example Zacchaeus ([Luke 19:1-10](#)). He was certainly needy for the Lord. Zacchaeus was spiritually lost because he didn't know Jesus yet. In addition, he

probably was one of the least and lonely to the common man because he was distanced from them due to his great wealth and social status, as well as due to the way he cheated people out of their money.

Zacchaeus was compelled and propelled by the love of Jesus and his life was liberated from the power and corruption of sin. In fact, after Jesus turned Zacchaeus' life upside-down, he gave half of his goods to the poor and restored four times what he had defrauded anyone ([Luke 19:8](#)). Salvation came that day to the house of Zacchaeus because of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here's what [Luke 19:9-10](#) states.

⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.” ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”
[Luke 19:9-10](#) (ESV)

What about those of you who haven't got a clue what I'm talking about? Or you know what I'm talking about, having a form of godliness yourself, but denying the power of it ([2 Timothy 3:5](#)). The gospel is merely religion. There's not a relationship with Christ as Friend, Lord and Savior. The Bible says you're spiritually lost and separated from God. But you don't have to stay that way. Could it be that today with the Holy Spirit's work, He is propelling you toward a life-changing decision to receive Christ and trust in Him through faith alone? If you haven't trusted Christ, today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to receive Jesus and live. Trust Jesus and know freedom from sin because He is the lover and liberator of the souls of man. That's good news for all of us and we all need the good news of the gospel!

How about those of us trusting Christ already? Has the good news of the gospel been so compelling that we're propelled by the very Spirit of God to impact the church, our community and the world for Jesus' sake? The Pharisees grumbled that Jesus visited a sinner such as Zacchaeus ([Luke 19:7](#)). If the Pharisees were to attend LEFC, would they have reason to grumble that we're too much like Christ? If we were accused of ministering in the name of Jesus to the emotional, physical and spiritual don't-wanters, misfits, outcasts and losers, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

Scotty Smith, pastor, author and professor of theology, says in his daily devotional book - *Everyday Prayers*: "It would actually be a good thing if our churches were places where Pharisees and "older brothers" ([Luke 15](#)) criticized us for all of the sick people, broken sinners and cultural misfits who gathered there. May we grieve when your welcoming heart [Jesus] is not extended as you intend."

An Exhortation To Be Christ-Centered

One of the facets of a Christ-centered life is displaying the welcoming love of Jesus. Scripture speaks of giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name ([Matthew 10:42](#)). What does that look like? Perhaps it would be visiting a prisoner in jail. Feeding the hungry. Clothing the naked. Reading a book to a child. Visiting an elderly shut-in. Sharing the gospel at every opportunity. In fact, Jesus said "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." ([Matthew 25:40](#))

So, my exhortation to the church is to be Christ-centered. Be compelled and propelled by the word of the cross. Be doers of the word and not just hearers only, deceiving yourselves ([James 1:22](#)). Let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth ([1 John 3:18](#)). The world is full of big-time takers and loud-mouthed talkers, but there's not enough grace-filled go-getters and gospel-dedicated doers. Which of those are you and me? Do we talk the talk, then don't walk the walk? Scripture states if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit ([Galatians 5:25](#)). Let the world see faith reflected in good works, so that our Father in heaven might be glorified ([Matthew 5:16](#)). I'll be rather blunt here in stating that so often at LEFC we're more focused on getting our theology right, than giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name. Our Christianity gets in the way of the gospel.

Conclusion

I'd like to begin wrapping this message up by sharing [Psalm 34:18](#) with you.

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
[Psalms 34:18](#) (ESV)

I'd also like to share a note that I wrote to my wife, Julie, during a difficult time. We definitely felt like a bruised reed and a faintly burning wick. We were needy for Jesus then and we still are now. The note goes like this: "Just a short note of encouragement to let you know I'll continue to support you in this difficult time. You mean too much to me not to keep praying for you and not to give up on our marriage when things look in despair all around us. Please know that I may not meet your expectations, but I won't give up on you. I do want to emulate the love of Christ, although it will be a poor example at best. Please don't give up on me because I need you and love you. Besides Him (Christ), there is no one else that has my affections except you."

Jesus didn't give up on Julie and myself. He'll not give up on you either. He held us fast through our messiness and broken-heartedness. He'll do the same for you. God in Christ doesn't give up on the downcast or the outcast. His plans always include saving, healing, restoring and strengthening. His plans included people like Rahab, Zacchaeus and the apostle Paul. His plans include people like you and me. Remember, the transforming power of Christ through the Holy Spirit means the least are welcomed; the lost are found and the lonely are loved. That's why Jesus is the Supreme Treasure. He is the greatest delight because there dwells no greater love, compassion, grace or mercy than in Him.

So, in conclusion here's a question. Why are you broken-hearted today? Is there a difficult situation you're in that makes you feel like you're in a dark dungeon with no way out? Run to Jesus! He is God's chosen servant to bind up the wounds of the broken-hearted. He is the One who opens the eyes of the blind to Himself. A bruised reed He will not break; a faintly burning wick He will not quench. He sets the captives free from the dark dungeon of sin and despair. He is the lover and liberator of the least, the lost and the lonely. Yes, we're needy for Jesus. Let's run to Him and live. Amen.