

Summary

Pastor Kevin teaches from Luke 15:1-7, the parable of the lost sheep, as the first message in the Christmas series 'Welcome Home.' He explains that Christmas is fundamentally about Jesus leaving His home in glory to enter our broken world so we can be welcomed home to God. The message addresses two audiences - the tax collectors and sinners who gathered around Jesus, and the Pharisees who criticized Him for welcoming and eating with sinners. Through the parable, Jesus illustrates God's heart for pursuing the lost, showing that He leaves the 99 to find the one lost sheep. The shepherd joyfully carries the found sheep home on his shoulders, representing how Jesus rescues us in our spiritual lostness.

The sermon emphasizes that we are all like sheep who have gone astray, unable to find our way back to God on our own. Just as sheep are valuable but vulnerable, we need a shepherd to rescue us. The message concludes with three key applications: Christmas is for sinners, repentance is how we get back home, and the size of heaven's celebration indicates our value to God. The service included a baptism testimony from Kyle, demonstrating the joy of being found and going public with faith in Jesus.

Intro Prayer

Father, as we gather together today, we ask that You would open our hearts to what You want to teach us. Help us to be receptive to Your voice and Your truth. We pray that You would speak to each person here according to their need - whether they are searching, struggling, or celebrating. Give us ears to hear and hearts that are tender toward You. We invite Your Holy Spirit to move among us and help us to understand more deeply Your love and pursuit of us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What is your favorite Christmas movie and why?

Key Verses

1. Luke 15:1-7
2. Isaiah 53:6
3. Psalm 23:1
4. Hebrews 12:2

Questions

1. Pastor Kevin mentioned that we can 'lose our way' in many different areas of life. What are some ways people commonly get lost today, and have you experienced any of these yourself?
2. The Pharisees measured holiness by the distance they kept from sinners, while Jesus measured holiness by those He pursued. How does this challenge our understanding of what it means to live a holy life?

3. In the parable, the shepherd leaves the 99 to find the one lost sheep. What does this teach us about God's heart toward individuals who are far from Him?
4. The sermon emphasized that sheep cannot rescue themselves and need a shepherd. How does this relate to our spiritual condition and our need for Jesus?
5. When the shepherd finds the lost sheep, he 'joyfully' puts it on his shoulders. What does this tell us about God's attitude toward us when we come to Him?
6. The message states that 'Christmas is for sinners.' How does this truth change the way we might approach the Christmas season or invite others to church?
7. Repentance is described as simply 'turning around' rather than trying to meet God halfway. Why is this distinction important, and how might it encourage someone who feels too far gone?
8. The sermon mentions that heaven celebrates when one sinner repents. How should this reality impact the way we view evangelism and sharing our faith with others?

Life Application

This week, identify someone in your life who might be 'lost' or far from God. Pray for them daily and look for an opportunity to extend a Christmas service invitation to them. Remember that your invitation could be the rope that helps guide them home to Jesus. Also, if you have never been baptized since placing your faith in Jesus, consider taking that step of obedience to go public with your faith.

Key Takeaways

1. Christmas is fundamentally about Jesus leaving His home in glory to enter our broken world so we can be welcomed home to God
2. We are all like sheep who have gone astray and cannot find our way back to God on our own - we need a shepherd to rescue us
3. Christmas is for sinners - it's good news for everyone, especially those who feel broken, lost, or too far gone
4. Repentance means simply turning around and receiving God's grace rather than trying to earn our way back to Him
5. Heaven celebrates when one sinner repents because that person is incredibly valuable to God - you are 'the one' Jesus came for

Ending Prayer

Father, thank You for this reminder that You are the Good Shepherd who pursues us in our lostness. Help us to remember that we are valuable to You and that You joyfully rescue us when we turn to You. For anyone in our group who feels lost or far from You, we pray that they would experience Your loving pursuit and turn toward You. Give us courage to share this good news with others and to extend invitations to those who need to hear about Your love. Thank You that Christmas is for sinners like us, and that through Jesus we can truly be welcomed home. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.