

It's Not about Perfection, but Direction

Luke 15:1-7

10/12/25

What Jesus wants most for us is to feel loved. Jesus doesn't want one person to be lost. It's not about perfection but direction. Growing our friendship with Jesus thru prayer and worship leads to the direction of serving others like Christ serves.

What does success look like? I appreciate this question when beginning a project. What does success look like for Newlonsburg? Is it how many people are coming to worship? How many are beginning and ending their day in prayer? Is it how many new members? How many children? Are we to shape the culture or be counter cultural?

At Men's Breakfast the other week our book entitled, *Jesus, Pope Francis, and a Protestant Walk into a Bar* asked the question "Are Christians to be mainstream or countercultural?" And that made me think, "What is mainstream American culture in 2025?" Is gambling mainstream American culture? Or is it countercultural to be opposed to gambling? Are tattoos mainstream American culture or not to have tattoos countercultural? Is gun ownership mainstream American culture? Is telling an employer or a coach that you can't come because you worship on Sundays, mainstream or countercultural? Is conservatism mainstream American culture or is liberalism? I am a conservative if we are trying to conserve individual liberty, conserve the Christian faith, conserve the environment. I am a liberal if we are trying to progress to free trade, progress toward healthcare for all, progress toward a safer society.

Then one of our men's breakfast members, after a few days to prayerfully consider, said, "The idea that really unites Americans is the idea of winning at all costs?" Winning the argument? Winning the election? Winning the game? Winning the war?

What is winning according to Jesus?

Luke 14:7-14

It's not about perfection, but direction. I know many in this room are perfectionists. Can you have a perfect relationship? Certainly, you can get a perfect score on a test, but I know in the past, I have gotten A's but didn't internalize the material. I've taken up to calculus 4 but never learned algebra. We tell our boys, don't worry about the grades as much as understanding the material. It's not about perfection, but direction of learning good study habits.

Back to the question of "Can you have a perfect relationship?" Probably not because people are always changing, but through the habits of communication and presence you can be on the direction of perfection. Can you be Christ's presence in the world? It's our hope and prayer for each other, but thru prayer (communication) and worship (presence) you can be on the direction of perfection. Or the big word, "sanctification." Through prayer and worship, we are becoming more Christ like in our thoughts and actions.

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In the first story, Jesus teaches that none are to be forgotten or given up upon. If we are practicing Jesus' faith of prayer and worship and going in the direction of Christlikeness, then we are to invite folks. If you haven't seen someone in worship in a while, give them a call. Tell them they are missed. Tell them they are needed, because they are. We will not be at peace until all the sheep are found! Our job is to find the sheep to be more like Jesus.

What does winning look like for Jesus? The second story answers this question beautifully. For those who lift themselves up will be lowered. And those who lower themselves will be lifted. Jesus redefines winning and losing for all of humanity. If you win the argument, but lose the person, have you won? If you win the election but undermine democracy, have you won? If you win the game but cheat, what are you teaching? Sometimes we must lose the battle to win the war. Jesus gives His life for us on the cross in the short-run, to win our soul in the long-run!

Jesus asks us directly to drive this point home, "What will you gain if you get all the wealth, win every argument, win every game, win all the battles but lose your soul?" -Luke 9:23-25 Its not about perfection, but the direction of Jesus Christ. Jesus says, if you want to become followers deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus. Make Jesus the priority of your life and you will find eternal life, purposeful life, intentional life, the meaning of life.

You'll have a different understanding of winning and losing. You'll have an understanding that wining is sharing. Not a life of poverty but sharing that which God has given to you. Friends, Jesus comes to save us from ourselves, because we have worth, we have purpose, and our purpose is to find our worth in Jesus Christ so that we can share our life, so others find their worth in Jesus Christ.

Love,
Pastor Curtis