

**INTRODUCTION** This is our Christmas Series: The Heart of the Father

- The Heart of the Father is **love**.

**John 3:16** (NIV) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

- Because He loves you, He pursues you, He values you, He sacrifices for you, and He provides for you.

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**GOD PURSUES: God pursues you because He loves you.**

**Psalm 23** (NLT) <sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. <sup>2</sup>He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. <sup>3</sup>He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. <sup>4</sup>Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. <sup>5</sup>You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. <sup>6</sup>Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

**Revelation 3:20** (NIV) Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

**Psalm 139:1-8** (NIV) <sup>1</sup>You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup>You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. <sup>5</sup>You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. <sup>7</sup>Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

**THE PARABLES OF LUKE CHAPTER 15:**

- Lost Sheep
- Lost Coin
- Lost Son

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- o God pursues you because He knows you, and He loves you. (**Psalm 139:1-8**)
- o God pursues you when you're lost. (**Romans 5:8** and **Isaiah 65**)
- o God pursues you in the darkness. (**Isaiah 9:1-6** and **Luke 1:76-79**)
- o God pursues you until He finds you. (**Luke 15:1-10**)
- o God pursues you to graciously offer you the choice to be found. (**John 8:12**)
- o God pursues you to joyfully celebrate when you become found. (**Luke 15:7-10**)
- o God has sent His son Jesus to pursue us. (**Luke 19:10** and **John 1:1-9**)

**GOD LOVES YOU. GOD PURSUED YOU. GOD IS PURSUING YOU.**

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## GOD PURSUES US IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY:

- God knows and loves His people, and He understands the condition they are in.
  - God knows they are lost and in need of being found. They are in need of a savior.
  - God sent Himself into the darkness in pursuit of us: the birth of Jesus.
  - God, through Jesus, graciously offers us the choice to be found and saved.
  - God is joyfully pleased and glorified when the people believe and acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, born of a virgin, the savior of the world and are saved.
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## The Christmas story is another example of how we have a God who loves us and pursues us.

1. Do you see the loving, pursuing heart of the Father in the Christmas story?
  2. How we celebrate Christmas reveals what we actually believe about it.
  3. How does the loving, pursuing heart of the Father revealed in the Christmas story shape the way you celebrate Christmas this year?
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- The heart of the Father is love.
  - Because He loves us, He pursues us.
  - We love because He first loved us. (**1 John 4:19**)
  - We pursue others because He pursued us first. (**Matthew 4:19** and **Matthew 28:19-20**)
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## QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

**Passages to consider:** Luke 1:26-36 and John 3:16-21

1. What from the sermon was insightful to you? A) How will it affect how you approach this Christmas season?
2. When you think of Christmas, what comes to mind? Try to quickly name 7-10 things. A) When you think of love, what comes to mind?
3. Read Luke 1:26-36 (see also Isaiah 7:13,14). What do you see happening in these passages? A) What does this tell you about who God is and His Father's heart toward us, His people?
4. Take a look at John 3:16-21 (see also Jeremiah 31:3). What does this tell you about God and about people? A) How does this passage relate to Christmas for you?
5. Who has modeled to you the way the heart of the Father, God, loves? A) How have you experienced how love pursues and shines light?
6. As the Christmas season is here, how will what you understand about the Father's heart impact how you interact with Jesus? Celebrate Christmas in your home? With your church family? And with those with whom you work, live, and play? Think of one or two small but significant ways to engage. *Idea: When you notice Christmas lights, think about how God loves you and the world and chose to send Jesus, the light of the world. Thank Him and tell someone.*

**Passages to prepare for next week:** Luke 2; Psalms 139; Ephesians 2:1-10

**Christmas Focus Idea:** If you read one chapter of Luke every day starting December 1st, you will read through the story of Jesus by Christmas!