

## God's Core Passion

1. Warm-up question: Do you have a hobby – serious or frivolous – that you're passionate about? Why did you choose that hobby and why does it give you so much pleasure?
2. On Sunday Jeff asked us to consider whether God has any hobbies, not in the sense of frivolous pastimes, but in the deepest sense. Oprah Winfrey once said, "Passion is energy. Feel the power that comes from focusing on what excites you." So on Sunday we asked: What most excites God? Where does God's deepest passion lie? For guidance, we began by looking at two key passages. Read John 1 and Proverbs 8, as excerpted and printed on p. 3.
  - a. *Logos* is the Greek word for divine wisdom. *Chokmah* is the Hebrew word that means the same thing. In both passages we just read, the term Divine Wisdom is applied to someone who's said to have been God's principal partner in creation. John 1 makes it clear that this is a reference to God the Son, *i.e.*, Jesus. Why do you think the term Divine Wisdom is applied to Jesus?
  - b. Both of the foregoing passages remind us of the Christian concept of the Trinity, *i.e.*, the idea that God is best understood by us as three persons operating together in perfect harmony – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Suppose someone asked you to define the concept of the Trinity, how would you define it? Do you like the Trinitarian way of understanding God? Why or why not?
  - c. Incidentally, in the Proverbs passage we just read, the pronoun "she" is used in reference to Chokmah, *i.e.*, Jesus. Jeff cited this as yet another biblical passage that reminds us that God is above and beyond gender. How do you feel about this Old Testament passage using a female pronoun to refer to Jesus? Why do you think the Holy Spirit inspired the author of Proverbs to refer to Jesus that way?
3. The very last phrase in the Proverbs passage tells us something really important about Jesus. It tells us that he takes special "delight in the human race" and "rejoices" over us. In other words, there's just something about how Jesus is put together that causes him to take special delight in us. As God's partner in creation, Jesus could have taken special interest in a million other things – the creatures of the sea, or the moon and the stars, or flowers and plants, etc. But that's not what Jesus naturally gravitated toward. Instead, we're told that Jesus takes special delight in us human beings. In fact, Jesus became so empathetically connected to us that, as John tells us, he eventually became one of us to live among us. That would be like someone into ant farming for a hobby becoming so over-the-top passionate that he/she decides to become an actual ant. Apparently, Jesus was/is that bonkers for us.
  - a. Why do you think Jesus is so passionate about us humans?

- b. Jeff used his instinctive, empathetic, over-the-top connection to dogs as an analogy to help us understand how Jesus feels about us. For the dog lovers among us (or the cat lovers), does that analogy help? How do you feel about your dogs or cats? What insights does that offer for how Jesus sees and feels about us?
  - c. In Jeremiah 31:3, God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Romans 8:39 says, “Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Many of us have been taught to think of God as distant and severe, so this new way of seeing God as love may challenge us. In your heart of hearts, are you able to feel how much God loves you?
4. Ironically, we humans often have a tendency to run from God’s love, which raises the question: What happens when one of us, or a whole bunch of us, lose our way? How does God react when that happens? Jesus answers that question in two short companion parables. Read Luke 15:1-10, as printed on p. 3.
- a. Tell us about someone or something precious that you once lost and never found? How did that feel? Do you think Jesus feels that way when one of us gets lost?
  - b. Tell us about a time when you found someone or something precious that had been lost. Do you think Jesus feels that way when one of us is restored to him?
  - c. Jeff noted the importance of the word “until” that appears in both parables. Jesus doesn’t say, “I think I’ll look and see IF I can find them.” Instead he says, “I’m going to look UNTIL I find them.” There’s nothing conditional or wishy-washy about Jesus’ determination to find and restore every single lost sheep – whatever it takes, for however long it takes. In fact, Jesus is so determined to find and recover every lost soul, he even descended into hell after his crucifixion, preached good news to people who lost their way in Old Testament times, and led many out of hell into heaven (I Peter 3:18-4:6). Jeff said, “If Jesus already did this once, I believe he will keep doing it again and again and again UNTIL every lost soul eventually finds its way home to heaven.” A lot of churches vehemently oppose that way of thinking. In their view, God gives up on lost people once they die. Your thoughts? What makes the most sense to you?
  - d. Psalm 139:7 says, “O God, where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence . . . ? [Even] if I make my bed in hell, you are there.” What do you think that verse means?
5. From all of the foregoing, we drew **Critical Life Lesson #7** in our sermon series on parables: **Jesus NEVER gives up on anyone; he searches UNTIL they are found. And if Jesus never gives up on anyone, neither should we.** Who’s someone you’re tempted to give up on? Describe what it might look like to pursue them like Jesus pursues us? Suppose that person is not yet ready to be found; what would Jesus do and therefore what should you do?

## John 1:1-3, 14

In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. . . . <sup>14</sup> And the *Logos* became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

## Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Does not *Chokmah* call . . . ? <sup>3</sup> Beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out:<sup>4</sup> 'To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.'<sup>22</sup> 'The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. <sup>23</sup> Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. <sup>24</sup> When there were no depths I was brought forth. . . . <sup>27</sup> When God established the heavens, I was there . . . , <sup>29</sup> when he marked out the foundations of the earth, <sup>30</sup> then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, <sup>31</sup> rejoicing in his inhabited world **and delighting in the human race.**

## Luke 15:1-10

Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

<sup>3</sup> So Jesus told them this parable: <sup>4</sup>'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. <sup>6</sup>And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." <sup>7</sup>Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

<sup>8</sup> 'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup>When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." <sup>10</sup>Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'