

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, Wisconsin
February 17, 2019

Me? A Friend of All: Hope in an Unconditional Gospel

Luke 15:11-32

Today as we continue our discussion of the LGBTQ mission field, I want us to consider this simple but incredibly important question.

Can a person who repeats the same sin over and over again be saved?

Specifically, can an individual who is involved in a gay relationship possibly be saved?

But let's broaden that question a bit. Can an individual who is involved in an intimate heterosexual relationship outside of marriage possibly be saved?

How about a couple who occasionally become intimate? Can they be saved?

Or how about a person who is addicted to watching sexual things, either movies or on the internet, that should not be seen (pornography addiction)?

Or how about a person who has lustful thoughts?

Or let's broaden it even further. Can an angry Christian possibly be saved? Many of you know what I mean by an angry Christian. That person that is super religious, but you try to avoid them because it seems they are always looking for a fight. If you don't know anyone like that, you are probably that angry Christian that others avoid. Can we Christians who fall into that same sin of anger over and over again possibly be saved?

In this **Me? A Friend of All** series we are focusing on the LGBTQ mission field, but what we learn about reaching out to people in that community applies to us all. We are all guilty of repeating some sin over and over again. So this is a very personal question for everyone of us.

Can a person who repeats the same sin over and over again be saved?

To seek an answer, let's go back to a time when Jesus was talking with a mixed group of people. He was talking to his society's version of the LGBTQ mission field and some angry "Christians" all at the same time (See Luke 15:1-2). He told three stories, one about a lost coin, another about a lost sheep, and finally a story about two lost sons. Let's listen again to that last story with that question in mind.

Can a person who repeats the same sin over and over again be saved?

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

²⁸ "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

³¹ "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Both groups who first heard this story could have shaken their heads in disgust at this father in Jesus' story. The story just wasn't realistic.

The younger son says, “Hey dad! I wish you were dead. But since you aren’t, can I get my money now?” The dad gives in and then sits and waits for this worthless, no-good son to come back. When the son is still a long way off, the father sees him and comes running for the son. And then he celebrates like that son never did all that bad stuff.

Can’t you see the Pharisees just shaking their heads in disgust? What kind of father would do that?

But as the story goes on, the “tax collectors and sinners” who were present would have shaken their heads in disgust. The older son is angry with the father. Again the father goes out to him! That just wasn’t done! Why is the father giving in to that horrible behavior?

What a great story! Everyone is angry with the father! Angry because the father is showing unconditional love.

That sums up the dilemma that I see as I think about the LGBTQ mission field. Some of us can be angry with God the Father because he offers them complete and unconditional forgiveness. And the LGBTQ community can be angry because they can see us Christians as the older brother in this story and God the Father seems to ignore our judgmental spirit.

Fortunately, God the Father does not change because we get angry with him. This story teaches us that

1. The Father’s love is always waiting.

God so loved the world (John 3:16). That familiar passage already announces that the Father’s love is like this father in Jesus’ story. He loves both the sinner younger brother and the angry saint older brother. But there is more to that story.

biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?qs_version=NIV&quicksearch=ungodly&begin=47&end=73

Google My St. Paul's BibleGateway Home - Dropbox Videos - St. Paul's - ... AmazonSmile Live Stream A Cool Million - Go...

	In Context Full Chapter Other Translations
1 Peter 4:18	And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” In Context Full Chapter Other Translations
2 Peter 2:5	if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; In Context Full Chapter Other Translations
2 Peter 2:6	if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly ; In Context Full Chapter Other Translations
2 Peter 3:7	By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly . In Context Full Chapter Other Translations

Have you ever studied the word “ungodly” in the New Testament? It occurs 13 times. Here is a screenshot from BibleGateway.

Just from these few examples you can see that “ungodly” is used as a synonym for unbeliever.

BibleGateway - Keyword Search: X +

biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?qs_version=NIV&quicksearch=ungodly&begin=47&end=73

Google My St. Paul's BibleGateway Home - Dropbox Videos - St. Paul's - ... AmazonSmile Live Stream G A

Romans 4:5 However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the **ungodly**, their faith is credited as righteousness.
[In Context](#) | [Full Chapter](#) | [Other Translations](#)

Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the **ungodly**.
[In Context](#) | [Full Chapter](#) | [Other Translations](#)

1 Corinthians 6:1 [*Lawsuits Among Believers*] If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the **ungodly** for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?
[In Context](#) | [Full Chapter](#) | [Other Translations](#)

1 Timothy 1:9 We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the **ungodly** and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers,
[In Context](#) | [Full Chapter](#) | [Other Translations](#)

2 Timothy 2:16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more **ungodly**.
[In Context](#) | [Full Chapter](#) | [Other Translations](#)

Here is another screen shot of that same search. Notice in Romans 4 and 5, the Apostle Paul uses the term “ungodly” in a strange way.

God “justifies the ungodly” (Romans 4:5). “Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

God declares the unbeliever justified or not guilty. Christ died for unbelievers.

This is the unconditional gospel that gives hope to every person who has to admit that they fall into the same sin over and over again. God doesn't justify the good. Jesus didn't die for the good. He died for the “sinner” group that Jesus was speaking to and the pharisaical “saints.” Jesus died for the LGBTQ and everyone of us who admits that we fall over and over again. Jesus died for the self-righteous judges who look down on the “sinners.” He died for all.

This is what is so amazing! God the Father's love is always waiting for us. The Apostles Paul and Peter, who saw themselves as the chief of sinners, agree. Paul wrote, “God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Peter wrote, “God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but that everyone come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Praise God the “unrealistic” picture of the father's love always waiting is true. That is true even though...

2. The sons' (or daughters') love is always wavering.

The unchanging nature of our Father's love is in contrast to our own. In our second lesson (Galatians 5:16-6:2), we heard that there is a conflict going inside every Christian. “The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other” (Galatians 5:17).

In fact, Paul in Romans 7 talks even more clearly that the sinful nature in us often leads us to do the opposite of what the “real” you, the spirit of God in you, wants.

“For I do not do the good I want to do, but **the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing**. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it” (Romans 7:19-20).

This is the truth about everyone of us, no matter where we land on the younger son/sinner-older son/pharisee scale. When God creates faith in us, we are a split personality. There are times we do what God wants us to do. But there are also times where we still see the power of the sinful nature at work within us.

St. Paul’s plea is the one that can be found on every believer’s heart: “Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?” (Romans 7:24 *New Living Translation*)

What does that mean as we think about our LGBTQ mission field, or any other mission field?

Let’s take care that we don’t judge each other as ungodly too quickly. We can see someone involved in what we are certain is a sinful lifestyle. Does that mean that they are an unbeliever condemned to hell? Not necessarily! Because everyone of us is involved in a sinful lifestyle in some way.

What is the sin that really keeps people out of heaven?

- a. Is it the LGBTQ lifestyle?
- b. Is it a heterosexual lifestyle that fails to honor marriage?
- c. Is it the older son/pharisee lifestyle that will keep us out of heaven?

The answer is “d,” “none of the above”!

The only sin that keeps us out of heaven is the sin of unbelief, rejecting the truth that Jesus died for the ungodly like me.

3. The Spirit’s love is always wooing.

The unforgivable sin is not homosexual sin nor heterosexual sin nor any repeating sin. The only unforgivable sin that Jesus spoke of was the sin against the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 12:31-32 he said,

So I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

To whom did he speak that warning? To the Pharisees who saw the power of the Spirit present in the miracles that he did, and then claimed that he was doing these miracles by the power of the devil.

But in that very same chapter, Matthew quotes the Prophet Isaiah in reference to Jesus’ ministry.

“Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.
²⁰ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.
²¹ In his name the nations will put their hope.”

(Matthew 12:18-21, quoting Isaiah 42:1-4)

Notice that aspect of Jesus’ ministry: “a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.”

This is at the core of the third part of our outline: “The Spirit’s love is always wooing.”

It is true, people can sin against the Holy Spirit. They can harden their hearts. And perhaps people that you have interacted with in the LGBTQ community have hardened their hearts. Perhaps you have seen a hardness of heart even among those of us who sit in these pews every week.

But how do you know for sure? It is very difficult for us to make an accurate assessment of what is on a person’s heart and mind.

That doesn’t mean we won’t share the truth of God’s law with that individual. That is what we are going to look at next week. We want to see God’s law clearly both in regard to homosexuality and heterosexuality. We want to be prepared to say all that God’s Word says, no more and no less.

When we have shown unconditional love to someone, that may open a door of close personal relationship where we can talk into the most sensitive parts of their lives. We may have the opportunity to speak the truth in love.

But let us speak first the truth of God’s unconditional gospel. Our ultimate goal is not to make a sinner stop sinning. That goal isn’t being reached in any of us and it won’t be reached in anyone in the LGBTQ community either. Our goal is to lead them to the Savior whose blood was shed to free them from their sins. We want them to know that Jesus died for the ungodly, so no matter where they are right now in their spiritual life, they can know that Jesus died for them.

So when you are interacting with anyone who seems to be living a godless lifestyle, let’s be part of the Spirit’s ministry of continual wooing. Let’s assume that all is not forgotten. A person can be living a sinful homosexual lifestyle or a sinful heterosexual lifestyle, but that doesn’t mean that they are not hearing the truth. Paul tells us in Romans 2 that there is a natural knowledge of God’s law. Their hearts may be condemning them. In fact, the very militancy that you see in someone may be an indication that the law is doing its work. When the law serves as a mirror and makes a person feel guilty, one reaction is to break the mirror, to reject that law. But even a broken mirror reflects the truth back at a person.

It is true that many people have that mirror fogged over. They have heard people say that the gay lifestyle is ok. We will try to remove some of that fog next week. But often the natural knowledge of God's law is still convicting and condemning them.

In addition, not only is there a natural knowledge of God's law, for many people there is also a remembered knowledge of God's law and gospel. Even though a person may be rejecting that message, it doesn't mean that it is still being heard in the deepest parts of their heart. They may very well be remembering the lessons they learned in childhood, even though their behavior doesn't reveal it.

Could we approach our mission field, whether that mission field be the LGBTQ side of the younger son/rebel scale or the pharisaic super Christian/older son side of the scale... could we approach our mission field with the thought, "I'm going to assume the best. I'm going to assume that the Spirit is still working on their heart. I'm going to assume that the Spirit's love is still wooing them. They may be in rebellion, but I will still want them to know that they have a Father who is just waiting for them to turn back to him."

I'd like to close with the reading of Psalm 42:1-5. It is written by the Sons of Korah. It is a song of remembrance. For some reason, the author feels far from God, unable to step foot into God's house.

I wonder how many former Christians in the LGBTQ community remember the comfort of God's love and long for that again. I wonder how many people present right here struggle with homosexual desires and thoughts and feel far from God and unwelcome in God's house. I wonder how many people here right now have some sin hidden in their heart that separates them from God.

No matter who you are or what you have done, come and join us in thirsty for a life-giving and eternal relationship with our Savior God.

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.

² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

When can I go and meet with God?

³ My tears have been my food
day and night,

while people say to me all day long,

"Where is your God?"

⁴ These things I remember

as I pour out my soul:

how I used to go to the house of God

under the protection of the Mighty One

with shouts of joy and praise

among the festive throng.

⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

Can a person who repeats the same sin over and over again be saved? Praise God, the answer that applies to all of us is “Yes!” If you are struggling to believe this can possible be true of you, let’s sit down and talk. No matter where you are on the younger brother/older brother scale, no matter what you have done, no matter what your temptations, the Father’s love is waiting for you, the Spirit’s love is wooing you. Make an appointment with one of us pastors. Let’s together put our hope in God, our Savior and our God. Amen.

Prepared by Pastor Peter Panitzke
414-422-0320 ext. 122
ppanitzke@stpaulmuskego.org

My Next Steps to be a Friend to All

- **Learn more:** This message series is based on the book *Gay and Gad: Loving Everyone God Made and Everything God Wrote* by Pastor Mike Novotny, the new speaker for Time of Grace Ministries. Order a copy at www.TimeofGrace.org/store. Read this book to hear the Savior’s call to “love people” and “love the passages.”
- **Discuss what you are learning:** GroupWork questions for the next four weeks are based on *Gay and God*. Booklets with the four weeks of questions are available at the Welcome Center. Discuss this topic in your small group, family, or circle of friends.
- **Ask questions:** We may understand the principle of an unconditional gospel, but how do you apply this truth in our daily lives? Lots of questions may arise. The questions you raise can help us develop the next messages in this series. We also want to talk these questions through with you. We are providing the following avenues to have a dialogue:
 - **Write** a question on the back of your Connection Card.
 - **Text** a question to Pastor Pete at 414-350-1436.
 - **Email** a question to ppanitzke@stpaulmuskego.org.
 - **Meet with Pastor Pete.** Every week during this series Pastor Pete will be present for discussion and questions: **Mondays at 6:30 pm in the Faith Room and Wednesdays at 10:00 am in the Grace Room.** We will discuss questions raised and, as time permits, use the GroupWork questions based on *Gay and God*.
- **Come back to hear more.** Me? A Friend of All requires:
 - **Unconditional Love** – last week’s message available at the Welcome Center or at www.StPaulMuskego.org/worship/sermons
 - **Unconditional Gospel** – today’s message
 - **Unconditional Bible** – February 24 – Luke 13:22-30
 - **Unconditional Trust** – March 3 – Luke 13:1-9

GroupWork

Study 2 – Feb 17 – 23

“LGBT”

Gay and God, pages 19 – 34

1. The message was based on Luke 15:11-32, Jesus parable of the Lost Son. Who was “more lost,” the younger son or the older son? Explain your thinking.
2. Read page 20. Why start the “Bible” part of the discussion with “God is good”?
3. What does the author acknowledge about the Sodom accounts (page 21, 22)?
4. Read the following passages. What did you learn about each of these from the book (pages 24-27)?
 - a. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
 - b. 1 Timothy 1:9-10
 - c. Romans 1:25-27
5. Read the following passages. What did you learn about each of these from the book (pages 29-30)?
 - a. 1 Corinthians 6:11
 - b. 1 Timothy 1:15
 - c. Romans 6:23
6. What do the letters LGBT stand for in this book? Why is the order so important? (pages 21-22)
L _____ G _____ B _____ T _____
7. “I learned the first rule of repentance: that repentance requires greater intimacy with God than with our sin” (page 34). Break into pairs or groups of three to discuss how you can have a more intimate relationship with God and then pray for each other.