

REDROCKS

[red•räks]

noun

1 Defining who we are.

2 Authenticity, Humility,
Unity, and Generosity.

WEEK 5 • GROUP GUIDE • MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Do you have any hobbies that you are passionate about? How did you get started with it and why is it important to you?

SHARE

Welcome to our ongoing teaching Series called “Red Rocks.”

What is Red Rocks Church? What does God say a church should be doing? Do we look like the type of church Jesus spoke about? If you are new to following God, how do you know the church you are a part of is a healthy church? During this series, we are going to explore what God says about our purpose and this beautiful-messy community of people that make up the church.

Jesus spoke a bold truth to his disciples that only later would they come to truly understand. In Matthew Jesus said, “...I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Jesus is the one who is building the church, he is at the head and we all play a part in the functioning body of Christ. The church is not a building, but a body of believers that are designed to move gracefully together, reaching out to those far from God while at the same time encouraging and building up one another in the process. This church Jesus spoke of is an unstoppable force that moves outward in a powerful way, so much so that not even “the gates of Hades” can overcome it. The church is the hope of the world, a shining city on the hill and we are not to be afraid or ashamed of the truth.

We exist to make heaven more crowded by being a place that welcomes home prodigals. Throughout this series, we have talked about being a front porch for prodigals, being authentic, living in humility and unity, and this week we will end our time talking about the value of generosity. This week we will examine the younger son’s return and the significance of what really happened that day.



Let's read Luke 15:20-24

Utey, R. J. (2004). The Gospel according to Luke talks about the significance of this section:

15:22 | The intensity of the moment is carried by the three AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVES. The slaves are commanded to do these things immediately!

“ ‘best robe’ ” This was a sign of position in the family.

“ ‘a ring’ ” This was a sign of his restored family position and authority.

“ ‘sandals’ ” This was a sign of a son of the owner, not a hired servant.

15:23 | “ ‘the fattened calf’ ” The Jews only ate red meat at very special occasions. This was the most valuable meat available.

Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant/Through Peasant Eyes*, makes the comment that by implication the killing of the fatted calf involved the whole community. There would be too much meat just for the estate. If so, this implies that the father solves the problem of the young son's acceptance back into the community by this feast (cf. pp. 181–187).

Also notice that this lavish banquet for the rebellious son is the unexpected element of the parable. Table fellowship was a Jewish metaphor for heaven (eschatological banquet). The shock is that the younger son (symbolizing the tax collectors and sinners) is the object of the feast, while the older son (symbolizing the religious leaders) refuses to attend and makes the point that there is no feast for him. This role reversal is typical of Jesus' teachings.

15:24 | This parallels vv. 6–7 and 9–10. Heaven rejoices at the restoration of sinners!

The father in this story represents the heart of God. Why is it so significant that the father in the story runs?

When you think about this story, what is the importance of being given the best robe, a ring, sandals, and celebrating with a fattened calf?

What would such a large and lavish celebration communicate to the community that day?

GROW

The orderly, calm and respectable father didn't care what anyone thought of him as he ran to his lost son upon his return. The community that day would have been taught to shun this son if he tried to return, but the father publicly ran, undignified, to his son to welcome him home. To some extent, this shows the power of divine love, that the father rushes to embrace the returning son. The father then hugged and kissed the son with no obvious reciprocal hug and kiss from the son. It is the father who initiates this graceful generosity.



Let's read Isaiah 61:1-10 and 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

In Isaiah, we read what Jesus quoted as he publicly read to the people in the synagogue recorded in Luke 4. Jesus was the fulfillment of this scripture, that he would preach good news, bind up the broken hearted, proclaim freedom, and favor.

As we read on in Isaiah 61:6, we see that God will make all of his followers ministers and priests proclaiming this good news. Instead of shame, there will be grace and rejoicing in the inheritance God has for us. In vs. 10 it is explicit that God alone will clothe us with a "robe of righteousness."

In the beginning section of Isaiah 61, we read the exact words that Jesus read publicly in a synagogue about himself. What are some of the things that God promised would happen through Jesus?

Why is Isaiah 61:6 important to those of us who are followers of Christ today?

According to 2 Corinthians 5:20-21, how do we become righteous? Can we do this ourselves?

Thinking about the story of the prodigal son, does this robe become more significant? If so why?

MOVE

At Red Rocks Church, we want to be marked by authenticity, humility, unity, and generosity. In a healthy church body, we must purposely put aside our personal preferences and humbly work together as a team. We make every effort to keep unified, building each other up, not allowing division to hinder the mission of the church, while becoming mature and striving to be more like Jesus. We will be a generous people as we are dispensers of God's truth and grace.

As we have walked through the story of the prodigal son this week, is there one item that the returning son was given that you personally struggle with accepting?

Things that the father generously gave to the returning prodigal:

A ring – indicative of being accepted completely in the family, the ability to proudly represent the father with authority and confidence.

A robe – honor, cleanliness, made righteous, clothed by God.

Sandals – no longer a slave, no longer destitute, not to be treated as a servant, but a family member.

A feast – represents that you are made worthy to be celebrated, that the father is overjoyed at your return to the family.



PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

Ephesians 2:8

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

