

Matthew 18:11-14

**Razing Hell
By Andy Thornton**

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Intro: Story of gas station, candy bars, and being all alone.

When I saw my dad come back to pick me up, there was no greater feeling in the world. Even though he was only gone for a few minutes I felt very afraid. I missed the security that only came from being in the presence of my dad.

This brings me to today's text: Matthew 18:11-14

¹¹ For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.^[a]

¹² "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? ¹³ And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that *sheep* than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. ¹⁴ Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Let's look at the fact that Jesus came to save that which was lost. Let's play the part of the sheep – since that is indeed who we are. If we are Christians now – it means that Jesus at one point left the others, came to find us, found us and brought us into his family. If you have yet to receive Christ as your Savior – he is pursuing you today. Are you hiding? Or will you allow him to rescue you today?

However, it is also our responsibility as believers to be the hands and feet of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (New King James Version)

²⁰ Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

In other words we are to do the leaving and finding and bringing back that Jesus did while he was on this earth in physical form. So, it is our job to rescue people who have strayed away from Christ or have yet to know him yet as their Savior.

How do we do this? Do we have another fellowship? Do we huddle in our small groups enjoying another story by our friend? Do we experience another great worship service, go to lunch and say how much it moved us or how much it stepped on our toes? These things are good, but they are not rescuing anyone!

A few weeks ago Pastor Hosea mentioned a poem that has helped me focus on this task of Razing Hell. It was from C.T. Studd. As a matter of fact, I put it on the front page of our website at ridgecrestbaptist.org. It says this:

*"Some wish to live within the sound
of Church or Chapel bell;*

*I want to run a Rescue Shop
within a yard of hell."*

Listen to that last part. I want to run a Rescue Shop within a yard of hell. Throughout the last few weeks Pastor Hosea has been talking about how we need to prepare ourselves to go into these areas. He will continue to go over this important prep work next Sunday. This study and preparation is crucial. It would be stupid of us to jump head first into areas of hell in our community and world without the preparation that will protect us from the Devil. However, after that preparation we need to move! Many of us have sat in pews for years and are very prepared, but have failed to move into battle. The time is coming when we will be called to move forward. What will it look like. Pay attention to this video from the C3 Conference Sarah and I attended two years ago. The man you will hear is named Tommy Barnett. He is the pastor of the Dream Center in California. Listen to a ministry they have at his church.

(Play video)

Doesn't that make you just a little excited? A few nights ago I had a dream about driving that van. How fun that would be to turn the corner and see 200 men who are ready to give their lives for the lady in the back of the van. How you are literally rescuing this lady from hell! I want a life that would do this.

God has laid on my heart a few things that would allow us to leave the 99 and find the 1. This list is a work in progress. I don't have all of the details, but the general ideas are as follows:

1. I would love to send 20-30 of our 60 – 70 year old women to local strip clubs to minister to the ladies there by providing care baskets. They would let them know how much they and Jesus love them. They would find out what the needs are in their lives and help meet those needs. Then, one day they would help them come to Jesus and get out of that lifestyle.
2. I would love to see our church grow in its awareness of fostering and adoption. I know that there are hundreds of children in this area that need good families that will love them and show them who Jesus is.
3. I would love to see a group of men take seriously the effects of pornography and begin to rescue those that are caught in its vice and see them set free! I think through this we could see marriages strengthened and some even restored.
4. I would love to see Pregnancy Care Center's ministry thrive even after they have lost government funding for their abstinence program which has shown incredible results in the drop of teen pregnancy since its inception. It's amazing how God's word works, huh?!!!

There is an opportunity coming quickly upon us that will allow us to raze hell more than we have ever done before. I am speaking of Step Into Africa. This is an exhibit that will fill most of the floor at our Remington's location. You begin by receiving an iPod Nano. You move into a holding tank as you are introduced to your child. You become that child. As you walk in his or her shoes, you find out how tough it is to be 8 years old and in charge of raising and caring for your brothers and sisters because your parents have

died of AIDS. When you get towards the end you (playing the part of this real child) are tested for AIDS. Are you positive or negative? Once you find out, you are taken to a prayer chapel that has pictures of hundreds of these children on the wall. Some who have already died of AIDS and some that are still holding on. This is where I lose it! Then you turn the corner and are asked to sponsor a child through World Vision. Every one of you in this church should sponsor at least one child. It is the least we can do. Our goal this year is to have 750 children sponsored by the end of this exhibit. It runs November 15-22 from 10AM – 8PM daily. You can register online which will allow you to take a group or family and go right to the front of the line. Teachers, you could also register for your class to go through. If you would like more information go to ridgecrestbaptist.org. You can also talk to Geoff or Joy Steele at Remington's to find out how you can volunteer to work this event.

There are so many more, but we are short on time. I believe that if we as a church begin to rescue people from the grips of hell in our community and world, we will truly see what we have been created for. And that is to be used by God as he receives the glory! There will be NO more Sundays where there is zero being baptized!!! I could live with that!!!

So the question is, are you ready to leave the 99 for a while and go find the ones that are in the grip of hell? What do you say? Should we make our personal battle cry be from C.T. Studd? I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell!!! Let's pray.