

Luke 15 - 3 Parables: The Lost Sheep; The Lost Coin; The Prodigal Son

IV. The Son of Man's journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51—19:28)

(2) Christ's instructions to his disciples as a result of this rejection (Luke 12:1—19:28)

(O) God's rejoicing over the repentant lost sinner (15:1-32)

(a) Parable of the lost sheep (15:1-7)

(b) Parable of the lost coin (15:8-10)

(c) Parable of the lost son (15:11-32)

Luke 15

(O) God's rejoicing over the repentant lost sinner (15:1-32)

(a) Parable of the lost sheep (15:1-7) (Cf. Matt 18:12-14)

1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near Jesus to listen to Him.

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1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners kept coming to listen to Jesus.

1 Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

- Jesus just called a would-be disciple to pay attention to what He said (14:35); here, Luke notes that many "publicans" (tax collectors) and "sinners" were doing precisely that

2 And both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to complain, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

2 But the Pharisees and the scribes kept complaining, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

- Jesus spoke these parables to answer the scribes and Pharisees:

- He not only welcomed these outcasts, He was *eating* with them
- The Son of Man had "come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10)
- They were blind to the fact that *they themselves were among the lost!*

3 And so He told them this parable, saying,

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3 So he told them this parable:

3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

4 "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the *other* ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?

4 "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

4 "Suppose one of you has 100 sheep and loses one of them. He leaves the 99 in the wilderness and looks for the one that is lost until he finds it, doesn't he?

4 What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

- This is a call to the disciples to exercise responsible pastoral leadership
- It taught the scribes and Pharisees how important the salvation of one "sinner" is to God
- Sheep have a tendency to go astray (Is 53:6)
- This sheep was lost due to foolishness (1 Peter 2:25)
- A shepherd had to pay for any sheep lost unless he could prove it was killed by a predator (Cf. Gen 31:38-39; Ex 22:10-13; Amos 3:12).

5 And when he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

5 When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

5 When he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders and rejoices.

5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

- The contrast between the lost and the found condition of one sheep was the cause for the shepherd's rejoicing

6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!'

6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'

6 Then he goes home, calls his friends and neighbors together, and says to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I've found my lost sheep!'

6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

- The parable pictures the shepherd (Jesus) taking the initiative in seeking the lost

7 I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over **ninety-nine righteous people** who have no need of repentance.

- 7 I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.
- 7 In the same way, I tell you that there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who don't need to repent."
- 7 I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repented, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.
- "...ninety-nine righteous persons" - represent the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees (v2)
 - Jesus used the term "just" (righteous) in irony; they were not really just/righteous, but they considered themselves so
 - The contrast then is between God's "joy" over one sinner's salvation compared to His sorrow over 99 self-righteous people's lack of salvation
 - Even though sinners coming to Jesus made the Pharisees grumble (v2), God's heart rejoiced. It shows how out of sync they were with God, and vindicated Jesus' contact with sinners.

In the Parable of the Lost Sheep, a relatively rich man lost one of his sheep, whereas in the Parable of the Lost Coin, a relatively poor woman lost one of her coins. The sheep was lost because of foolishness (v4), but the coin was lost because of the woman's carelessness, through no fault of its (the coins) own but by surrounding circumstances.

(b) Parable of the lost coin (15:8-10)

- 8 "Or what woman, if she has ten **silver coins** and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds *it*?"
- 8 "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds *it*?"
- 8 "Or suppose a woman has ten coins and loses one of them. She lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it, doesn't she?"
- 8 Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*?"
- "...silver coins" - *drachma*, a Greek silver coin that equaled about a day's wage
 - The coin she lost was precious to her, even though it did not represent great wealth; its value is clear from the trouble to which she went to find it
 - Jesus' point: A single sinner is extremely valuable to God; similar wording in v6,9
 - His repetition of the same point in another, similar parable, shows the importance of the lesson He wanted His hearers to learn

9 And when she has found *it*, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found the coin which I had lost!'

9 When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!'

9 When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found the coin that I lost!'

9 And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

- The point is the same as the previous parable: there is great rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repents

— Additionally, it stresses the fact that God willingly goes to great lengths to seek out and find the lost. This attitude contrasts with the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees (v2).

10 In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

10 In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

10 In the same way, I tell you that there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who repents."

10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

- They had forgotten that God had sought out Adam and Eve when they had sinned and attempted to hide from God (Gen 3:8-9)

— God is portrayed as a father who pities His wayward children (Ps 103:8-14)

Perhaps Jesus intended to focus on the Jews in the first parable, since He compared the lost one to a sheep from the Master's fold (Israel). The second parable may compare the lost coin to a Gentile, since a Greek coin was lost. If so, the numbers may be significant. Only a small number of Jews would experience salvation, compared to a greater proportion of Gentiles who would believe the gospel. Acts reveals the comparative unresponsiveness of the Jews and the receptivity of the Gentiles.

(c) Parable of the lost son (15:11-32)

11 And He said, "A man had two sons.

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11 Then Jesus said, "A man had two sons.

11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that is coming to me.' And so he divided his wealth between them.

12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.

12 The younger one told his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So the father divided his property between them.

12 And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.

- Normally an estate was not divided and given to the heirs until the father could no longer manage it well. This father acquiesced to his son's demand and gave him his share of the inheritance.

— To request the inheritance prematurely was tantamount to expressing a wish that the father would die

— The younger son's portion would be approximately 1/3; the eldest son got a double portion (Deut 21:17). Disposition of the father's estate before his death would probably have yielded about 2/9ths of the total.

— The father's willingness to accommodate his younger son's request shows that he was gracious, generous, and illustrates God's willingness to permit each person to go their own way

— The younger son's request precluded any future claim on his father's estate (v19)

13 And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey to a distant country, and there he squandered his estate in wild living.

13 And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

13 A few days later, the younger son gathered everything he owned and traveled to a distant country. There he wasted it all on wild living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

- The younger son took that wealth, converted it to cash, went far away, and squandered it in wild living, involving himself presumably, as his older brother said, with prostitutes (v30)

— He may have wanted to "find himself" but he ended up losing himself

In the first parable (Lost Sheep), the sheep got lost because of its nature to wander away. In the second (Lost Coin), the coin was lost due to circumstances beyond its control. In this third parable (Lost Son), the son gets lost as a result of his own choice.

Liberty is not the freedom to do as one likes; it is the empowerment to do what one ought.

— Dr. William Welty

The hearers would have understood the point of the story. Jesus had been criticized for associating with sinners. The sinners were considered people who were far away from God, squandering their lives in riotous living. In contrast with the younger son, the older son continued to remain with the father and did not engage in such practices.

14 Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began doing without.

14 Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.

14 After he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

15 So he went out to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

- Commentators presume the far country was east of the Sea of Galilee where Gentiles tended pigs (Luke 8:26-37)

- Feeding pigs was unclean work for a Jew; this wasn't a job any self-respecting Jew unless they were in total desperation (Lev 11:7). The younger son did it because he was in a destitute situation.

16 And he longed to have his fill of the carob pods that the pigs were eating, and no one was giving him *anything*.

16 And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving *anything* to him.

16 No one would give him anything, even though he would gladly have filled himself with the husks the pigs were eating.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

- In his hunger he longed for the pods—the food he fed the pigs

- The son had sunk so low that no one showed him any compassion

17 But when **he came to his senses**, he said, 'How many of my father's **hired laborers** have more than enough bread, but I am dying here from hunger!

17 But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!

17 "Then he came to his senses and said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more food than they can eat, and here I am starving to death!

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

- "...he came to his senses" - in this low condition, he came to his senses. He decided to go back to his father and work for him. Surely he would be better off to work for his father than for a foreigner.

— He changed his mind, then his attitude, then his behavior

- "...hired laborers" - a day laborer; ordinary slaves were in a sense members of the household, but a day laborer could be dismissed with a day's notice

18 I will set out and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

18 I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

18 I will get up, go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and you.

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired laborers."

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."

19 I don't deserve to be called your son anymore. Treat me like one of your hired men."

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

- He fully expected to be hired by his father as a servant, not to be taken back as his son

20 So he set out and came to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

20 So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

20 "So he got up and went to his father. While he was still far away, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him affectionately.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

- The father had been waiting for his son to return... The father *ran to him*, and hugged and kissed him.

21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

21 Then his son told him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and you. I don't deserve to be called your son anymore.'

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

- The son had brought disgrace to his family and village *and was eligible to have been stoned to death!* (Deut 21:18-21)

22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet;

22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;

22 But the father told his servants, 'Hurry! Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

- The father cut his son's confession short because he knew what was in his heart (Cf. 1 John 4:18)

- Rather than simply accepting his son back, much less making him a hired servant, the father bestowed the symbols of honor, authority and freedom on him.

- Instead, the Father prepared a banquet to celebrate the son's return, gave the son a new position, and gave him a robe, a ring (emblem of his *sonship*), and sandals and a ring (emblems of a free man). In comparison:

— Pharaoh established Joseph as prime minister of all Egypt; gave him a robe and a signet (Gen 41:42)

— God has clothed us with garments of salvation (Is 61:10; 2 Cor 5:21)

- He *had not lost his sonship* (Cf. Ps 103:10-14)

- Banquet = coming kingdom (Luke 13:29; 14:15-24)

- Significance To Jesus' Hearers: Sinners were entering into the kingdom because they were coming to God. They believed they needed to return to Him and be forgiven by Him.

Everything the younger son had hoped to find in the far country, he discovered back home: clothes, jewelry, friends, joyful celebration, love, and assurance for the future. What made the difference? Instead of saying, "Father, give me" he said, "Father, make me." He was willing to be a servant!

23 and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let's eat and celebrate;

23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let's eat and celebrate!

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry:

- The father did not ask him to "earn" his forgiveness. No amount of good works can save us from our sins (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-7).

24 for this son of mine was **dead** and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found! And they began to celebrate.

24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found! And they began to celebrate.

24 Because my son was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and has been found. And they began to celebrate.

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

- "...dead" - *nekros*, was the son really physically dead? Of course not, because the son returned to the father and was standing in front of him. He didn't resurrect from the dead.

-- We need to understand the biblical metaphor of death. It does not always refer to physical death. When used metaphorically, it represents a separation from God.

-- In this verse, "lost" matches with "dead" and provides a further definition. The son was not physically dead, he was "lost" or separated from his father

-- Calvinists refer to death (esp in Eph 2:1) as an inability to respond to God. They pull verses that support this belief, out of context, from all over the NT, then compile them into their doctrine of Irresistible Grace: that God first needs to regenerate a person (only one who is "elect") before they can believe in Christ.

Jewish Idiom: Abraham and Isaac

When Abraham was instructed in Gen 22 to take his promised son Isaac and offer him on a mountain (Gal 3; Rom 4; Heb 11), as far as Abraham is concerned, *Isaac was dead when the commandment came*.

Abraham had no problem with offering up Isaac. God had promised him that Isaac would have children. From Abraham's point of view, it was God's problem. God would simply have

to raise him back from the dead (Heb 11:19).

25 "Now his **older son** was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

25 "Now the father's older son was in the field. As he was coming back to the house, he heard music and dancing.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

– "...older son" – symbolic of the scribes and Pharisees, working hard for their father

— The Jews, and the religious leaders, equally enjoyed the privileged status of an older brother in the human family, because God had chosen them for special blessing (Ex 19:5-6)

— The older brother missed the banquet apparently because of his preoccupation with the work and his distant relationship with his father. For him, and for the Pharisees, all was based on merit and reward. He viewed himself more as the father's servant than as his son.

26 And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be.

26 And he summoned one of the servants and *began* inquiring what these things could be.

26 So he called to one of the servants and asked what was happening.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'

27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'

27 The servant told him, 'Your brother has come home, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he got him back safely.'

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.

28 But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and *began* pleading with him.

28 "Then the older son became angry and wouldn't go into the house. So his father came out and began to plead with him.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

- The older son's anger, at the father's forgiveness and acceptance of his brother, contrasts with the father's loving compassion demonstrated by his coming out and entreating him

- Similarly the scribes and Pharisees were angry with the message Jesus was preaching. They did not like the idea that people from outside their nation as well as outcasts and sinners in the nation were to be a part of the kingdom. The fact that Gentiles would be reached was part of the mission of Israel.

- Jesus had previously warned the two disputing brothers, "Take heed and beware of covetousness" (Luke 12:15)

— Like the older son who refused to go to the feast, the Pharisees refused to enter the kingdom Jesus offered to the nation

— The same loving father that ran to meet the prodigal son came out of the house of feasting to entreat the older brother!

29 But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you never gave me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

29 But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! All these years I've worked like a slave for you. I've never disobeyed a command of yours. Yet you've never given me so much as a young goat for a festival so I could celebrate with my friends.

29 And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

- Disrespectfully, the older son boasted of what he had done for his father, then blamed him for not giving him more.

— Clearly he thought his father's response should have reflected justice rather than grace

— He was counting on a reward commensurate with his work (Cf. Matt 20:12). This hardly reflects a loving relationship.

— The older son didn't stay home because he loved his father, but because working in his fields was a way to get what he wanted

30 but when this **son of yours** came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fatted calf for him!

30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!

30 But this son of yours spent your money on prostitutes, and when he came back, you killed the fatted calf for him!

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

- "...son of yours" - the older brother refused to recognize his brother as his brother, since he had dishonored his father. By using this term, the older brother was implying that the father shared his younger son's guilt.

— Interesting that everyone in this story experienced joy except for the older brother

— In the end, what the older son wanted was recognition (Cf. 17:7-10; Matt 20:11). He felt that his father had made his brother superior to him.

The proud and the self-righteous always feel that they are not treated as well as they deserve.

The Prodigal Son

Older Son

- relationship based on works;
- served father - not out of love - but out of desire for reward;
- saw himself in bondage to father.

Pharisees

- religion of good works;
- focused on externals; they hoped to earn God's blessings;
- knew very little of the grace of God.

The Prodigal Son

Older Son

- lacked concern for his missing brother;
- resented his brother's coming home.

Pharisees

- had no burden for the lost.

The Prodigal Son

Older Son

-Broke both of these:

He did not love God
(the Father);

He did not love his
younger brother.

Jesus Taught

The two great
commandments:

Love God

Love Others

31 And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.

31 And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.

31 "His father told him, 'My child, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

- "...Son" - *teknon*, child or son, a term of tender affection

— The father responded to the older son's hostility with tenderness and reason

— He pointed out his older son's privileged position, as always benefiting from his father's company

— The religious leaders had a privileged position as members of God's Chosen People. The scribes and the Pharisees were the recipients and guardians of the covenants and the Law (Rom 3:1-2; 9:4).

— All that God had was Israel's, in the sense that they always had access to it—because of the privileged relationship He had established with the nation

32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours **was dead and has begun to live**, and was lost and has been found!"

32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and **has begun to live**, and was lost and has been found!"

32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and has been found!"

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

- "...was dead and *has begun* to live" - Jesus didn't die so that bad people could become good. He died so that dead people could live (Cf. Col 2:13-14).
- The older son could've celebrated with a fattened calf whenever he wanted. In this case, it was "meet" [KJV] (necessary; right) to celebrate the return of sinners, implying that the older brother should have joined in the rejoicing.
- The parable ends with the father's implied invitation to the older son to enter the banquet. That invitation was still open to the Pharisees when Jesus told the parable.
- The father had the last word. Yet, we don't know how it ended (much like Jonah 4).