

The Parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, & Lost Son (Luke 15)

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The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹ Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³ So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

⁴ “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ ⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ ¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. ¹³ And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. ¹⁴ But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’

²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’

²⁸ “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’

³¹ “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’”

The Point of the Parables

- Parables are earthly stories with heavenly meanings.
 - Jesus preached in parables to separate those who earnestly desire truth from those who do not (**Matt. 13:12-15**).
- These parables picture:
 - A sheep wanders away from its shepherd.
 - A coin lost by its owner.
 - A son receives an inheritance from his father and wastes it, leaving him in dire straits.
- Jesus preached these parables after hearing, “**This Man receives sinners and eats with them**” (**v.2**).
 - The listening audience was a mixture of tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, & scribes (**v.1-2**). The latter two groups especially needed to hear these stories.
 - All three parables emphasize the value of every individual soul (**v.7, 10, 32**).
 - We see characters in these parables exhibiting emotions such as joy, compassion, gladness, and merriment upon finding what was once lost because they recognized the value of what they lost (**v.6-7, 9-10, 22, 24, 32**).

The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

- Sinners are sheep needing the Shepherd's help (**Jer. 50:6; Isa. 53:6; Matt. 9:36; 1 Pet. 2:25**).
- Whereas the Pharisees and scribes did not see the value in the tax collectors and sinners, Jesus used these parables to illustrate how important every individual soul is to God (**v.4-6**).
 - The shepherd is concerned for every single sheep. When so much as one sheep goes astray, the shepherd desires to bring it back into the fold of safety.
 - Just because God has ninety-nine sheep or nine other coins, the one sheep or the one coin is still lost and needs to be found!
 - The sheep / coin doesn't lose its value just because the owner has other sheep / coins.
 - In contrast, the Pharisees and scribes were hirelings; they seemingly wouldn't go after lost sheep (**v.4; see also John 10:12-13**).
 - We cannot possess that attitude about lost sheep / coins (**Gal. 6:1-2; Rom. 15:1-3; 1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Cor. 12:18-26**).
 - Every lost sheep who comes back to the fold is so valuable that heaven rejoices upon its return (**v.7, 10**).

The Lost Son – Lessons from the Father

- Sometimes, a parent has to let his child make his own mistakes (**v.11-13**).
 - Children have free will to choose right / wrong just like a parent does (**Josh. 24:15**).
 - Parents can shelter and encourage their children to do right (**Prov. 22:6**), but children have to determine for themselves what type of life they want to live (**Isa. 7:16**).
- The father did not bail out his wayward son or make excuses for his sinful life.
 - Instead, he patiently and lovingly waited for his return, looking for him to come home, i.e. repent (**v.20; see also 2 Pet. 3:9**).
 - The Lord is always waiting with his hand extended; we must simply act upon it (**Matt. 14:29-31**).
 - When his son did repent, the father completely restored and embraced him (**see 2 Cor. 2:3-8; Luke 22:31-32, NLT**).

The Lost Son – Lessons from the Wayward Son

- Possessing and enjoying all the goods in the world will still leave a person in want (**v.14; see also 1 John 2:15-17; Tit. 2:11-12**).
- Sometimes, it takes hitting absolute rock bottom for us to realize our condition (**v.15-17**).
- Looking at his own lack of food in comparison to his father's servants' excess food is what made the son wake up and repent (**v.17-20**).
 - There is **nothing** wrong with looking to the reward as motivation for obedience – Heaven should be one of our greatest motivators (**Rev. 7:16-17; Heb. 11:24-26**)!
- The son openly and voluntarily acknowledged the severity of his sins (**v.21; see also Psalm 51:1-4; 1 John 1:8-9**).
- The son recognized there may be consequences (or restitution needed) for his sins (**v.18-19; see also Luke 19:8; Matt. 3:8; 2 Cor. 7:10-11**).
- A wayward son of God is dead to the Father until he repents (**v.24; see also Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23; James 5:16, 19-20**).

The Lost Son – Lessons from the Eldest Son

- Instead of being angry when a member of the family of God repents, we should be thankful that the person has returned to fellowship with the Father and with his children (**v.7, 10, 32; see also 2 Cor. 2:6-8, 7:10-13**).
- The eldest son had an inheritance with the father just like his younger brother (**v.31**), but he did not squander it. Therefore, the eldest son was not rebuked but was commended for his faithfulness.
 - Like with Jesus and the rich young ruler (**Matt. 19:20**), the father did not correct the older son when he claimed that he kept all of his father's commands. He really had been faithful.
 - The eldest son is equivalent to the ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance (**v.28-31, 7**).
- The son who needs no repentance and the son who needs repentance are equals (**Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 John 1:8-10**).

Conclusion – The Value of a Soul

- The theme across all three parables is that every soul is valuable.
 - Our soul is our most valuable possession (**Mark 8:36-37**).
 - God has given every person an eternal soul (**Ecc. 12:7**).
 - Therefore, **EVERY** soul is valuable (**v.4**).

How do you view others' most valuable possession?

What are you doing with your most valuable possession?