

Luke Chapter 15

Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus in 3 different settings.

1. We see Jesus in open / public places – teaching, preaching, and healing.
 2. We see Jesus in quiet solitary places communing with the Father, praying.
 3. We see Jesus in somebody's home often with diverse groups. Pharisees, tax collectors, fishermen – enjoying a good meal.
- In the previous chapter it was a Sabbath day, Jesus was invited to a meal at the Chief Pharisees' house – with the intent of watching and trapping Jesus.
 - Whether this dinner was held inside with open windows or in a courtyard we don't know. It is likely that the other non-invited guests waiting outside could linger on the periphery to watch or listen to the conversation.
 - As Jesus rebuked the host, and chastened the guests, he exits and admonishes the crowd towards real faith – that if they wanted to be His disciples it would require real commitment, having counted the cost.
 - As Chapter 14 ends and 15 begins, we see Jesus moving away from the Pharisees to the awaiting crowd.
 - His last statement was “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” – and now look who gathers around.

V: 1-2 The tax collectors / publicans and other assorted sinners drew near to Jesus – not because of His “seeker friendly” easy going message or His “you’ll get rich” - “prosperity doctrine” – they were drawn to Him because He loved them, and He gave them the truth and gave them a real hope for everlasting life.

- “Tax collectors & Sinners” - “Sinners” would have covered them all, but He adds in “tax collectors” - almost like saying the worst of the worst, at least in their eyes.
- You can fill in the blank yourselves on whoever you think the worst of the worst is knowing that there is hope for them too.
- Sinners: those who missed the mark, having erred from the way.
- At the same time, the Pharisees and scribes noted that Jesus turned away from them to direct His attention to the other people who weren't invited to the meal. At this point, Jesus is talking to those who know they are sinners.

Luke 19:10 “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

- Jesus attracted sinners whereas the Pharisees repelled or expelled them.
- Accusation: “*This Man receives sinners and eats with them.*” True! Aren’t you glad that He does?! (What are His options?) (He just did! Where did He just come from?).

Romans 3:10 “For there is none righteous, no not one.”

- The Pharisees & Scribes really didn’t care about the lost sheep of Israel, they looked down upon them, and they didn’t want to be defiled by them.

V: 3 This parable, (singular), is comprised of three connected illustrations that all point to one common lesson: the joy of restoration, the lost being found.

- While this parable is directed at the Pharisees and Scribes, I believe it speaks to all of us as well.
- We all start off as being lost in need of restoration to God.

Romans 5:1 “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through or Lord Jesus Christ.”

V: 4 A man, a shepherd who has 100 sheep, losing one goes out to find it leaving the 99 behind.

- In that day, the people could really relate to this parable: they know how sheep are prone to wandering away.

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way;...”

This is why sheep need a shepherd:

1 Peter 2:25 “For you were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

- The Pharisees & Scribes saw the tax collectors and sinners as law breakers deserving of damnation, not realizing that they were in the same category themselves.

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

- Jesus saw the same group as lost sheep in need of salvation, in need of a shepherd.
- I’ve never seen the sense in this; leaving the 99 to fend for themselves while searching for the one lost sheep.

- Anyone who has 100 sheep probably isn't out there by themselves, they have other under shepherds whom they trust, in whose care they leave the 99 while they search for the one lost sheep.
- If a shepherd were to loose any sheep, it would be required of him, he would have to pay for that lamb out of his own pocket, unless he could prove that a predator had taken and killed it. He would also be exposed to public ridicule as a "bad shepherd" for having lost one of the flock.

Jesus, praying to the Father:

John 17:12 "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." (This is partly why Jesus is the Good Shepherd!)

- The shepherds would gather the sheep at night into a sheep fold, sometimes a cave, or an enclosure made of rocks or a fenced wall with a small opening.
- The one opening, the one door into the fold was guarded by the shepherd who would lay down in the doorway to protect the sheep and determine who gets in or out. That is a picture of our Lord Jesus.

John 10:9 "I am the door: If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out, and find pasture."

- The shepherd would have each lamb pass before him, inspecting them, counting them. Then finding one missing, he would leave the other shepherds to watch the flock – then he'd go and search out the lost sheep.
- The lost sheep, out by themselves were particularly vulnerable to predators, bleating for their master, a sound which predators love to hear as well. The shepherd upon finding his lost lamb would take it and carry it upon his shoulders bringing it back to the fold where it would be safe.
- Jesus is pointing out that the reaction of the Pharisees, the shepherds of Israel, to the sheep, to the finding of the lost sheep was un-natural, they should have been rejoicing. Why weren't they? Because they didn't really love the sheep.

Ezekiel 34:2 "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to them, thus says the Lord God to the shepherds; woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?"

V: 5-6 So when the shepherd finds the lost sheep, he rejoices. He doesn't scold it for getting lost in the first place.

Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."

- He rejoices and places it on his shoulders, heads home and calls his friends together to rejoice with him for having found the sheep that was lost.
- That lost sheep was small enough to pick up and place on his shoulders and carry home. This seems to describe the young, immature believer that's lost their way. (Spiritual maturity vs: physical maturity)

V: 7 Jesus relates that in a similar fashion how all the saints and angels in heaven rejoice over the sinner who repents, more than the 99 still safe back in the fold.

Zephaniah 3:17 "The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing."

V: 8-9 A woman with 10 pieces, 10 drachmas of silver. A drachma was = to ¼ shekel. A denarius was a days wage, and a drachma was worth a little than that.

- When a Jewish woman got married it was a tradition that she received a head band with 10 silver coins sewn into it that hung across the forehead, indicating that she was a married woman, indicating that she was valued in her household – it was a badge of honor.
- Naturally if she lost one of those coins she would search diligently through her house until she found it.
- In those days they had dirt floors, sometimes they had straw mats on top of the dirt, there was usually only one small window for ventilation and light – it was not an easy search.
- Silver is the metal of redemption, and what a joy when she finds her coin that was lost.
- How was it found? She lit a candle, or a lamp... and searched diligently.

Psalms 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

- Where do we find redemption? In God's word.
- Finding it, the natural response is to rejoice, she would rejoice and call her friends to rejoice with her.

V: 10 Again there is a correlation to the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents of their sins.

- In the first part of this parable regarding the lost sheep, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who seeks after His sheep!

Consistent:

John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”

- In the 2nd part of the parable, of the lost coin, the woman represents the Holy Spirit who is searching out, searching for the lost until they be found.

John 16:7-8 “⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

- For the Pharisees and Scribes this was unthinkable, there was no place in their theology or their understanding of God to consider that God would actually search for a lost sinner, but it's been that way from the beginning.

Genesis 3:9 “And the Lord God called to Adam, and said to him, where are you?”

- Now we come to the parable of the prodigal son – here we have the Father who goes out to receive the lost.

V: 11-13 A man had two sons. In this type of scenario the oldest son typically got a larger portion than the younger son – 2/3 to 1/3 is how this would have been divided.

- The younger son didn't appreciate what he had, he was impatient. Sadly this son valued the goods more than the one who provided them. (Giver vs: gift)

Admonished:

1 John 2:15-16 “¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

- The younger son gathered all his stuff and went far away and squandered his inheritance.
- In doing this he turned away from his father, rebelling against his governance and his father's rule in his life, he also left the safety of home and entered into the world with all its vices.
- Previously the sheep was lost through foolishness, and the coin perhaps through carelessness, but the son was lost because of willfulness.

V: 14-16 After depleting his resources, squandering it away there arose a severe famine and he found himself in want, having nothing.

- The Jewish boy ends up feeding the swine, and envying them their meal.
- “No one gave him anything” – The world doesn’t have compassion or pity on him.

Proverbs 6:26 “For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.”

V: 17-19 When he came to his senses, when he came to himself – back to “normal”.

- Sin, like fear makes us crazy... 5150 H&S Danger to himself or others.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 “The mystery of iniquity / lawlessness....” is only held back by the power of the Holy Spirit. We see some pretty crazy, wicked things in this fallen world.

- Unlike the other parts of this parable, the father did not go out to seek the son.
- It was the memory of his father and his goodness that brought this son to his senses, it was the memory of his father that brought him to repentance and forgiveness, it was the memory of his father that drew him homeward!

Psalms 16:11 “You will show me the path of life: in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

- It is the goodness of God, that leads us to repentance.

Romans 2:4 “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?”

- His painful circumstances helped him to see his father in a new way, and this brought him hope.
- When we realize that we’ve sinned against God and come to that place of repentance, when we acknowledge we are not worthy; that is when we too are in our right mind, delivered from the insanity of sin.

Psalms 51:4 “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight: that You might be justified when You speak, and be clear when You judge.”

V: 20 The prodigal son didn’t just have the idea, or let it remain a good thought – he took action! He arose and he came to his father.

- Repentance isn’t just a thought, it’s an action:

- When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him – because he was looking for him, waiting for him, hoping, praying – that his son would come home.

Psalm 86:5 “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon you.”

- The father had compassion: the father still has compassion and ran to his son.

Micah 7:18 “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?”

- Old men don’t run, it’s not dignified, it looks funny - but this one did. He fell on his neck, he embraced him and kissed him. He expressed his love!

V: 21 The son begins to confess, “Father I’ve sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.”

- The son humbles himself before his father and confesses.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

V: 22 The father having heard the confession says – bring out the best robe, no doubt the father’s robe, he’s under the father’s covering. Put a ring on his finger – the signet ring symbolic of authority; put sandals on his feet.

- The father is ready to forgive, eager to forgive, to extend grace to his children.

Psalm 103:10-12 “¹⁰He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; ¹²As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

- This is a picture of complete restoration.

V: 23-24 Kill the fatted calf, it is time to rejoice!

- The father acknowledged that his son had passed from death to life – something well worth rejoicing over.

3 John 4 “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

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- In these parables neither the lost sheep nor the lost coin could “find” themselves, someone had to go out looking for them – and someone did.

- The lost man had to come to the place of understanding that he was lost and how far he'd fallen – then he knew where to go – as the father waited for him to come to that conclusion, waiting to welcome him with open arms.

- Now we get to the punch line on these parables; which Jesus began to speak in response to the attitude of the Pharisees and Scribes.

V: 25-27 The older son, working in the field, laboring – unaware that the younger brother had returned, and none too thrilled about it. The celebration had started without him.

V: 28 The older brother, like the Pharisees and Scribes, wasn't happy about any of this and became angry and bitter.

- When the older brother wouldn't come in to celebrate, wouldn't come into the father's house – the father reached out, the father initiated, he went out to the older son in the same spirit of love and compassion as he had for the younger son.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

- The father tried to reason with his son, he “entreated him” / “pleaded with him.”

V: 29-30 The older son expresses his resentment and bitterness:

1. I've been obedient all these years – thinking he would gain the favor he already had.
 2. I've worked and served all these years – resentfully, with a bad attitude.
 3. You never gave me what I didn't ask for; you didn't give me what I wanted.
 4. You've been too nice, too generous, too merciful, too gracious; and all this to the undeserving, this “son of yours.”
- He's been out of harmony with the father the whole time! He did the right things – but for the wrong reasons, with the wrong heart.

Vv:12 “... *so he divided to them his livelihood.*”

- They each had received their inheritance. The prodigal wasted it, and the older acted like it wasn't there. He didn't lay hold of it.
- Here were the Pharisees trying to keep the law to the letter, wearing their robes tightly wrapped around themselves to avoid touching sinners, lest they be defiled. The Pharisees who wouldn't think of eating with a sinner – I've kept your law, kept your commandments... but not the law of love! They represent the older bitter son.

- They were so worried about being contaminated and defiled that they wouldn't associate with the ones they were supposed to be ministering to.
- They didn't realize that when Jesus was among them, He wasn't a conflicting or a corrupting influence, He was a correcting & a purifying influence.

John 15:3 “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

- Whenever Jesus ate with sinners or touched them, He wasn't defiled – but they were cleansed, forgiven, and restored.
- Jesus is pointing out that the Pharisees & Scribes are out of harmony with their heavenly Father who rejoices when lost sheep are found, when the coin is found (redemption discovered), when men pass from death to life – it's time to rejoice, not to resent.

V: 31 I've been right here with you, everything I have is already yours. (V:12)

- This older son didn't appreciate the greatest gift that he already had. It wasn't the gifts, the sheep, or the money - the greatest gift was and is the presence of the Father. He is our inheritance!

V: 32 This is fitting, don't you realize – your brother was dead, and now he's passed from death to life – he was lost and now he's found – it's appropriate that we rejoice!

“... *you brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.*”

- He's gone from death to life: he repented, he turned to the father and confessed his sins, and was restored to new life.
- Jesus had a conversation with a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus, one of the religious leaders.

Jesus told him:

John 3:7 “You must be born again.” - Nicodemus didn't understand what that meant.

- Like the prodigal son we too must pass from death to life, being “born again” in the Spirit.