

The Parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

Luke 15:1-10

Luke 15:1-10: 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. 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."

Background Notes

Luke 19:10 is one of the key verses of the Gospel of Luke: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." These three great truths are illustrated in Luke 15: sinners are lost; God loves us wants to save us; God has sent the Savior to seek and save those who are lost.

Luke 15 contains three parables. In each parable, something is lost – a lost sheep, a lost coin, and then, in the well-known parable of the "prodigal son," a lost son. In each parable someone is seeking - wanting to find something that is lost: a shepherd, a woman and a father.

Who do these lost items represent? In the immediate context, the answer is in verses 1 and 2. "*Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them."* The people the Lord was addressing were "lost people." Some of them knew that they were lost, like the tax collectors, and the "open sinners" such as prostitutes, and the folks who were ceremonially unclean. Others in the audience – the self-righteous, sanctimonious scribes and Pharisees - did not know that they were sinners, and just as lost. They actually thought of themselves as being close to God - and far from being lost.

Notice what the proud scribes and Pharisees said about the Lord in verse 2: "*This Man receives sinners and eats with them.*" Aren't you glad that the Lord is "guilty as charged" here? Praise the Lord, He *does* receive sinners, and He is willing to have fellowship with us! The self-righteous, rules-conscious scribes and Pharisees didn't think they were

sinners. They thought that they had it made with God because of their “holy” lifestyle. They looked down on and despised the “tax collectors and sinners.” As Luke 11:52 indicates, these religious leaders even did whatever they could to hinder common folk from entering the Kingdom by steering people away from following Jesus! *“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”* These scribes and Pharisees not only thought they were righteous and didn’t need to repent - they actually hindered other folks from entering the Kingdom!

The Lord gave three parables to show that **everyone** is lost and needs to be found! The one who is seeking the lost in each parable is obviously God. It’s been noted and pointed out by many commentators that when the three parables are taken together, the Trinity is portrayed. In the Parable of the Lost Sheep, we see God the Son seeking the lost. In the Parable of the Lost Coin, we see God the Holy Spirit seeking the lost. And in the Parable of the Lost Son, we see God the Father seeking the lost.

Doctrinal Points

1. The parable of the lost sheep emphasizes our wayward ways and the Savior’s love.

As most of you know, sheep are noted for their wandering. They don’t do it out of rebellion; they do it out of ignorance and stupidity. Apart from Christ, we are nothing but foolish sheep. If there was going to be any hope at all for us, the Lord had to come and find us, because there was no way we could save ourselves. And sheep don’t wander back home - they go further astray! Isaiah 53:6 - *“All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”* Our sins and iniquities were laid on the shoulders of the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, who is the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the seeking Shepherd in Luke 15.

Notice how the love of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is seen in this parable. He didn’t beat or scold the sheep when he found it; rather, He carefully picked it up and placed it on his shoulders. On Jesus’ shoulders - what eternal security! What better picture could we want? And the shepherd rejoiced when he brought the sheep home! *“And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 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! 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.’”*

What a great thought - to know that the Lord rejoices over us! And to know that there is rejoicing in heaven over every sinner who repents! *“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

The ninety-nine sheep who supposedly “needed no repentance” were righteous in their own eyes only. They represent the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. Notice, by the way, that the ninety-nine sheep were left out in the open field, or

the wilderness - not in the home fold. In the parable, only the sheep that was lost and then found was brought to the shepherd's home. The ninety-nine sheep were not brought into the home fold. Remember, this parable is about salvation, not about backsliding.

Let's read an old hymn, entitled "The Ninety and Nine."

"There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away, far off from the gates of gold;
Away on the mountains wild and bare; away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou hast Thy ninety and nine. Are they not enough for Thee?"
But the Shepherd made answer: "This of Mine has as wandered away from Me.
And although the road be rough and steep, I go to the desert to find My sheep."

But none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed, nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through ere He found His sheep that was lost. Out in the desert He heard its cry - sick and helpless, and ready to die

Lord, whence are those blood-drops all the way, that mark out the mountain's track?" "They were shed for one who had gone astray Ere the Shepherd could bring him back." "Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?" "They're pierced tonight by many a thorn."

But all through the mountains, thunder-riven, and up from the rocky steep, there arose a cry to the gate of heaven, "**Rejoice! I have found My sheep!**" And the angels echoed around the throne, "**Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!**"

The parable of the Lost Sheep emphasizes our wayward ways and the Savior's love.

2. The parable of the lost coin emphasizes our dead condition and the Holy Spirit's mission.

In the second parable, the lost item was a coin - a Greek drachma, worth about a day's wages. Women of that day would often wear their dowry coins in a headband. Sometimes the value was more sentimental than monetary. No wonder the woman searched diligently to find that one lost coin! The coin was lost and could do nothing to find itself. It was helplessly lost in the dark and in the dust of this 1st century home.

In the same way, we were lost and dead in this dark world until God found us and brought us out of the darkness. 1 Peter 2:9, "*God has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*" The woman in the parable may represent the Church, the Bride of Christ. If so, then the Holy Spirit's present mission is portrayed in this parable. The Holy Spirit is working

through the Church with the lamp of God's Word to search out those who are lost. In any case, the main point of the parable is that we are valuable to the heart of God - but we are lost and need to be found. God diligently searches for us and rejoices along with all of Heaven when we repent and are saved! The Parable of the Lost Coin emphasizes our dead condition and the Holy Spirit's mission.

Practical Application

He would come, even if you were the only one!

Did you ever wonder whether the Lord Jesus would leave Heaven and come to earth to save you if you were the only sinner on earth? Suppose no one else needed redemption - only you! Would the eternal Son of God leave Heaven and become a Man, go to the cross and die that shameful death of crucifixion *just for you*? What do you think?

The answer is: **Yes, He would!** Do you think our Lord would have given the parable of the one lost sheep if the answer was No? The Lord is concerned about every single individual lost sheep. Yes, He would have come - even if *you* were the *only one*!