

## Wednesday Evening Bible Study

January 8, 2020

The Gospel of Luke

*Searching for Lost Things*

Topics – Luke 15; lost sheep; lost coin; lost sons; prodigal son

Text – Luke 15

### Introduction (vs. 1 – 3)

In chapter 15, we have the very familiar parables of the lost sheep, the lost silver, and the lost sons. Jesus is giving us these three illustrations in response to the attitude of the Pharisees, which was that Jesus should not be rubbing shoulders with sinners. There are a couple of problems with this attitude. First, it displays an attitude of superiority, that the Pharisees were somehow better flesh than the sinner. The parable of the publican and the Pharisee further illustrates this problem (Luke 18:9 – 14).

The second problem is that the Pharisees could not see any faults of their own. They did not see themselves as sinners.

Theologians have debated for centuries as to whether this passage is referring to lost sinners coming to Christ for the first time; or whether it is referring to saved, but straying sinners coming back to the Heavenly Father. I am personally convinced that if we attempt to apply these parables to today that we would be forced to say that all three of these are speaking primarily about a saved person being restored to fellowship for the following reasons:

- 1 If you are a sheep – you belong to the shepherd.
- 2 If you are a coin – you are a possession.
- 3 If you are a son – you have been birthed into the family.

I think the real interpretation of these parables has to do more with Israel than the Church. Notice the two groups that Jesus was addressing: first he was talking to the publicans and sinners from the nation of Israel; and also he was talking to the Pharisees and scribes that were ticked off because He was talking to the sinners.

This crowd that Jesus is addressing in Luke 15 is really representative of the two sons from verse 11. The one son was a prodigal and knew it; and the other one was also a prodigal, but didn't know it. He was like the Pharisee that outwardly was doing everything that he was supposed to be doing, but his heart was far from the father's.

Another very important point is this: Notice that in each one of these illustrations or parables the focus is on one: one sheep; one coin; one son. God is interested in individuals. We need to be concerned with the individual, not just the multitudes.

#### I. The Lost Sheep (vs. 4 – 7)

The repentance of a struggling saint (or a lost sinner) is a source of great joy in Heaven and it ought to be a cause for rejoicing here on earth as well.

We are also glad when saved people who have been doing well, continue to do well. But, to see someone who is struggling, and away from God, come to his senses and repent, that is a greater source of rejoicing.

## **II. The Lost Piece of Silver (vs. 8 – 10)**

This parable is another way to illustrate the same truth that was previously given regarding the lost sheep. Notice here the wording is slightly different. Here it says “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God.” Who is in the presence of the angels of God? God Himself, but also the saints that have died and whose souls are in Heaven. It is a source of great joy to the people in Heaven when someone gets right with God, as well as when someone gets saved.

## **III. The Lost Sons (vs. 11 – 32)**

### **1. The lost son gained nothing by leaving; he eventually lost everything.**

This lost son was attracted to what was out there in the world. He thought he would have more fun in the world, and that the people in the world would care more about him than his father did, but he quickly found out that the world had no use for him after he ran out of money.

Notice in this case, the father does not go searching for the prodigal son. He is waiting for him, and he is looking for him. But, the prodigal must make the decision on his own to come back. The repentant prodigals in our lives need to know that they are welcome to come back, but they need to make the decision.

### **2. The lost son did not get back everything when he returned.**

Notice also that the prodigal didn't come back necessarily for the right reasons. He came back because he didn't have any other choice. He was starving. The father did not make it easy for him to stay out there. He didn't send him any food, he didn't facilitate his rebellion. But, when the prodigal came back, he was willing to give him some things, but not everything.

Note – he did not get the brother's inheritance, but he did get all that the father still possessed himself. The prodigal still had temporal consequences to his leaving. He may have suffered physically from where he had been. He didn't get back the inheritance. He still would need to win the trust of the people he hurt. There is a difference between forgiveness and trust. Forgiveness is free, but trust is earned.

### **3. The other brother lost nothing by staying.**

The other brother, however, is not rejoicing. He feels that somehow he lost something by obeying the rules, and by his brother's coming back. He has the same attitude the Pharisees had. He lost nothing by keeping the rules. He was sleeping in a warm bed, living in a beautiful home, and eating delicious food. Instead of having compassion on his brother, he is jealous of the attention the brother was getting.

### **4. The other brother lost nothing when his brother returned.**

He still possessed everything that he had before. He should have rejoiced. His attitude indicated that he was just as lost as the lost brother.