

October 8, 2023
God's Good News Story
Jesus and His Parables
Pt. 3: Lost & Found

In our year long series '*God's Good News Story*' we have traced the work of God to bring mankind into a right relationship with Him. It has been a story of obedience and disobedience of light and darkness.

Today we continue with our focus on Parables. Remember... "A parable is a story told to illustrate a truth. Jesus' parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies, comparing two things or ideas. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning."
<https://www.gotquestions.org/parables-in-the-Bible.html>

"Once upon a time there were two families who lived next door to each other. The families were quite different. The first family were Christians. They took good care of their house and lawn. They never used tobacco, alcohol, or drugs. They never cursed or fought loudly with one another. The kids were never in trouble with the law. And they all went to church every Sunday. The second family had nothing to do with God. Their house and lawn were a mess. They smoked and drank to excess and used marijuana to "mellow out." They cursed and fought loudly with one another. The kids were

always getting in trouble with the law. They never went to church. One day the teenage daughter from the first family told her father, "You know, Dad, I think there's trouble next door. Their kids told some of my friends at school that their dad and mom are going to get a divorce." "All right!" Dad shouted excitedly, as his favorite team on the game he was watching threw a touchdown pass. After the extra point was kicked he mumbled, "Divorce, huh? Too bad!" The daughter went into the kitchen where her mother was preparing dinner and repeated the news. Her mother nodded her head knowingly. "That's what they get for not going to church and for living like they do. Let that be a lesson to you, in case you ever get the notion you don't want to go to church! I sure hope we get some decent neighbors in there after they're gone!" And, behold, the second family split up and moved away. And the new neighbors were decent people who kept up the house and yard, never smoked or drank or used drugs. They never cursed or fought loudly. Their kids were honor students. The new family even went to church occasionally. And the first family lived happily ever after, never bothered by their neighbors again. It's just a story, of course. I hope that none of you identify yourselves with that first family because even though they are Christians, they are not much like the Lord Jesus Christ. This family avoided their lost neighbors and rejoiced when they finally moved away. But Jesus socialized with lost sinners and rejoiced when they came to repentance". <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-71-god%E2%80%99s-lost-and-found-luke-151-10>

Today we are going to look at three (3) parables that have a similar theme. A theme of something that was ***lost and now is found and the joy of that restoration***. There is also a strong co-plot of religious pride and elitism.

Also, these parables fit it with the core theme of **The Scarlet Thread of Redemption**. In this series we have been discovering how much God loves us and to what lengths He will go to find His lost and erring sheep.

“When reading Luke 15, it is easy to forget the context , especially when reading the parable of the prodigal son. The chapter opens with the Pharisees and scribes criticizing Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners (vv. 1–2). Jesus' table fellowship with sinners signifies the gospel of grace. All those who turn from their sin and put their faith in God will enjoy the messianic feast forever. Jesus tells His opponents three parables to defend His table fellowship with sinners: the parable of the lost sheep (vv. 3–7); the parable of the lost coin (vv. 8–10); and what I call the parable of the two lost sons (vv. 11–32). By addressing the Pharisees and scribes in parables, Jesus gives them indirect direction. He doesn't directly criticize them for their self-righteous and loveless attitudes. Instead, He subverts their self-understanding through parables so that they understand the love of God and see themselves in the self-righteous older son”. <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/jesus-mission-to-the-lost-luke>

Gospel of Luke Chapter 15

The Lost Sheep

¹ Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near Jesus to listen to Him. ² And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to complain, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”³ And so He told them this parable, 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? ⁵ And when he has found it, he puts it on his shoulders, 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!’ 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.

The Lost Coin

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

“The parable of the lost sheep recounts a story from a man's world (vv. 3–7). If a shepherd loses one sheep out of one hundred, he pursues it until he finds it. Upon finding the lost sheep, "he calls together his friends and his neighbors," summoning them to rejoice with him (v. 6). The earthly joy over finding a lost sheep reflects the joy in heaven over a sinner who repents. Since the Pharisees and scribes were not rejoicing but grumbling over Jesus' table fellowship with sinners, they were not mirroring God's attitude toward those who repent.

The next parable addresses the world of women (vv. 8–10). If a woman loses one silver coin out of ten, she diligently searches for it until she finds it. When the coin is discovered, she calls together her friends and neighbors to celebrate. Similarly, the angels in heaven are full of joy when a sinner repents. Both this parable and the preceding one reflect the character of God. He pursues sinners, beckoning and inviting them to turn from their sin and live. We think of

Ezekiel 18:23: *"Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?"*

Romans 10:21 says *But as for Israel, He says, "I have spread out My hands all day long to a disobedient and obstinate people."* The Pharisees and scribes do not reflect the character of God. Instead of longing for the repentance of sinners, they grumble and complain about the sinners' conversion". <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/jesus-mission-to-the-lost-luke>

These parables teach us that finding lost 'sheep' and missing 'coins' is the joy, privilege and responsibility of anyone who claims to be a Disciple of Jesus. Jesus set the example and even stated this as a core mission objective...

Luke 19:10... *Jesus said 'I have come to seek and save the lost.*

This mission is made clear in this last parable of the Prodigal Son.

The Prodigal Son

“A prodigal is a person who squanders money recklessly and selfishly, and then comes to regret their foolish behavior. Today, the term ‘prodigal’ has come to represent the repentant return of a person, no matter the reasons they left in the first place”.

<https://findinggodamongus.com/prodigal-son/>

Most people are familiar with the descriptive heading of the Prodigal Son. But please note that in the actual biblical text the headings are not there. They were added by later translators. It is a good description, but many Bible scholars and teachers point out that the story is about Two Sons, and the character of the ‘Father’ is actually more of the story’s point. A loving, merciful and caring father who is representative of our Heavenly Father.

Luke 15:11-32...¹¹ And He said, “A 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. 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. ¹⁴ Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began doing without. 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. ¹⁶ And he longed to have his fill of the carob pods that the pigs were eating, and no one was giving him anything. 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!’ 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; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired laborers.”’ 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. 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.’ 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; ²³ and bring the fattened calf, slaughter it, and let’s eat and 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. ²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and

dancing. ²⁶ And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. 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.’ ²⁸ But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. 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; ³⁰ but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’ ³¹ And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 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.’”

“The main message of The Prodigal Son Parable is that it doesn’t matter how far we stray from our Heavenly Father or how much we squander the gifts he provides, he is always delighted when we turn back to him. His unconditional love is waiting for us to return home where he greets us with open arms, as the father rejoiced in his son’s return. Every lost child (a sinner, meaning all of us) who is found (turns to God) is cause for the greatest celebration”. <https://findinggodamongus.com/prodigal-son/>

“The prodigal son was satisfied to return home as a slave, but to his surprise and delight he is restored back into the full privilege of being his father’s son. The weary, gaunt, filthy sinner who trudged home was transformed into the guest of honor in a rich man’s home. That is what God’s grace does for a penitent sinner (Psalm 40:2; 103:4). Not only are we forgiven in Christ, but we receive the Spirit of “adoption to sonship” (Romans 8:15). We are His children, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). The father’s command to bring the best robe for the returned son is a sign of dignity and honor, proof of the prodigal’s acceptance back into the family. The ring for the son’s hand is a sign of authority and sonship. The sandals for his feet are a sign of his not being a servant, as servants did not wear shoes. The father orders the fattened calf to be prepared, and a party is held in honor of the returned son. Fatted calves in those times were saved for special occasions. This was not just any party; it was a rare and complete celebration. All these things represent what we receive in Christ upon salvation: the robe of the Redeemer’s righteousness (Isaiah 61:10), the privilege of partaking of the Spirit of adoption (Ephesians 1:5), and feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, prepared to walk in the ways of holiness (Ephesians 6:15). The actions of the father in the parable show us that “the LORD does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. ***For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions***

from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him” (Psalm 103:10–13). Instead of condemnation, there is rejoicing for a son who “was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (Luke 15:32; cf. Romans 8:1; John 5:24). Those words—*dead and alive, lost and found*—are terms that also apply to one’s state before and after conversion to Christ (Ephesians 2:1–5). The feast is a picture of what occurs in heaven over one repentant sinner (Luke 15:7, 10).

The Older Son

The final, tragic character in the Parable of the Prodigal Son is the older son. As the older son comes in from the field, he hears music and dancing. He finds out from one of the servants that his younger brother has come home and that what he hears is the sound of jubilation over his brother’s safe return. The older brother becomes angry and refuses to go into the house. His father goes to his older son and pleads with him to come in. “But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’” (Luke 15:29–30). The father answers gently: ***“My son, . . . you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad”*** (verses 31–32).

The older son's words and actions reveal several things about him:

- 1) His relationship with his father was based on works and merit. He points out to his father that he has always been obedient as he's been "slaving away"; thus, he deserves a party—he has earned it.
- 2) He despises his younger brother as undeserving of the father's favor.
- 3) He does not understand grace and has no room for forgiveness. In fact, the demonstration of grace toward his brother makes him angry. His brother does not *deserve* a party.
- 4) He has disowned the prodigal as a brother, referring to him as "this son of yours" (verse 30).
- 5) He thinks his father is stingy and unfair: "*You never gave me even a young goat*" (verse 29).

The father's words are corrective in several ways:

- 1) His older son should know that their relationship is not based on performance: "My son, . . . you are always with me, and everything I have is yours" ([Luke 15:31](#)).
- 2) His older son should accept his brother as part of the family. The father refers to the prodigal as "this brother of yours" (verse 32).
- 3) His older son could have enjoyed a party any time he wanted, but he never utilized the blessings at his disposal.
- 4) Grace is necessary and appropriate: "We had to celebrate" (verse 32).

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law, mentioned in [Luke 15:1](#), are portrayed as the older brother in the parable. Outwardly, they lived blameless lives, but inwardly their attitudes were abominable ([Matthew 23:25–28](#)). They saw their relationship with God as based on their performance, and they considered themselves deserving of God's favor—unlike the undeserving sinners around them. They did not understand grace and were, in fact, angered by it. They had no room for forgiveness. They saw no kinship between sinners and themselves. They viewed God as rather stingy in His blessings. And they considered that, if God were to accept tax collectors and sinners into His family, then God would be unfair.

The older brother's focus was on himself and his own service; as a result, he had no joy in his brother's arrival home. He was so consumed with justice and equity (as he saw them) that he failed to see the value of his brother's repentance and return. The older brother had allowed bitterness to take root in his heart to the point that he was unable to show compassion toward his brother. The bitterness spilled over into other relationships, too, and he was unable to forgive the perceived sin of his father against him. Rather than enjoy fellowship with his father, brother, and community, the older brother stayed outside the house and nursed his anger. How sad to choose misery and isolation over restoration and reconciliation!

The older brother—and the religious leaders of Jesus' day—failed to realize that “anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. ***But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness; he does not know*** where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him” ([1 John 2:9–11](#)).

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is one of Scripture's most beautiful pictures of God's grace. ***We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*** ([Romans 3:23](#)). We are all prodigals in that we have run from God, selfishly squandered our resources, and, to some degree, wallowed in sin. But God is ready to forgive. He will save the contrite, not by works but by His grace, through faith ([Ephesians 2:9](#); [Romans 9:16](#); [Psalm 51:5](#)). That is the core message of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. <https://www.gotquestions.org/parable-prodigal-son.htm>

Some Take-Away Points:

1. God cares for and takes care of His children as a Shepherd does for his sheep.
2. Everyone is valuable and God is not willing anyone should perish.
3. God actively pursues those wandering from Him. There is hope for the lost.
4. True Repentance and a humble spirit assure us of grace and mercy being shown to us.
5. We should rejoice when the lost are restored and not hold their past against them.
6. Watch out for spiritual or religious pride.

Let's join God's “Search & Rescue” Team. It's time to ‘seek & save the lost’. God wants everyone to come home to the ‘Father’