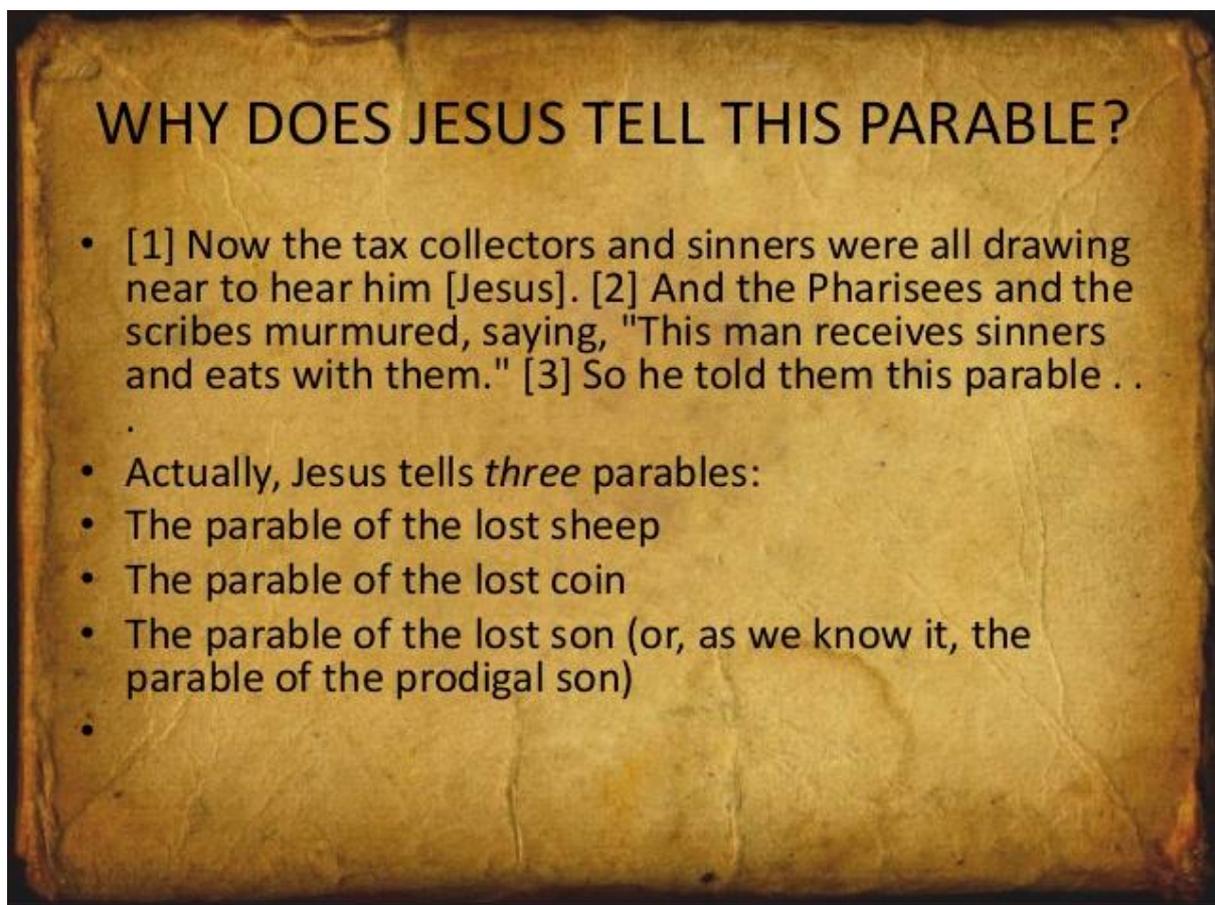


We found in the two talks thus far that Jesus told the parables of the Lost Coin and the Lost Sheep to illustrate that God places great value on lost people. He reminds us that there is great joy in heaven when even one lost person returns to His love. As we go to our third parable this morning, the Parable of the Lost Son, it's interesting to remember that some believe the three parables to be one parable of three parts with a common theme running through all parts. And we are reminded again as the Bible was read to us, in the first three verses, as to the context in which Jesus told the three parables.



Now to our third parable of the trilogy told by the Lord Jesus in Chapter 15, **“The Parable of the Lost Son”**; God the Father is here depicted as a **certain man who had two sons. The younger son** typifies the repentant sinner, whereas the older son illustrates the scribes and Pharisees. The latter are sons of God by creation though not by redemption. The younger son is also known as the prodigal son.

A prodigal is one who is recklessly extravagant, who spends money wastefully. This son became weary of his father's house and decided he wanted to leave. He could not wait for his father to die, and so asked for his portion of the inheritance ahead of time. The father distributed to his sons their proper share.

Shortly afterward, **the younger son set out for a far country and spent his money frivolously on sinful pleasures**. As soon as his money was gone, a severe depression gripped the land, and he found himself destitute. The only employment he could get was as a farm hand feeding pigs- a job that would have been most distasteful to a Jew. As he watched the pigs eating their pods, he envied them. They had more to eat than he had, and no one seemed disposed to help him or even to care. The friends he had when he was freely spending his money had all disappeared.

However, **the famine proved to be a blessing in disguise**, for it made him think. He remembered that his father's hired servants back home were living far more comfortably than he was. While they had plenty of food to eat, he was wasting away with hunger. Thinking about the situation, he decided to do something about it. He determined to go back to his father in repentance, acknowledging his sin, and seeking pardon. He realised that he was no longer worthy to be called his Father's son, and he planned to ask for a job as a hired servant.

Long before he reached his home, **his father saw him and had compassion on his son**. He ran and threw his arm around his neck and kissed him. Graciously in his parable, Jesus pictured God, not wanting for his shamed child to slink home, nor standing on his dignity when he came, but running out to gather him, shamed and ragged and muddied as he was, into his welcoming arms.

The son made his confession up to the point where he was going to ask for employment. But the father interrupted by ordering the

slaves to put the best robe on his son, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. He also ordered a great feast to celebrate the return of his son who had been lost and was now found. As far as the father was concerned, he had been dead but now was alive again. Someone has said, *“The young man was looking for a good time, but he did not find it in the far country. He only found it when he had the good sense to come back to his father’s house.”* It has been pointed out that they **began to celebrate**, but it is never recorded that their joy ended. So, it is with the salvation of the sinner.

When the older son returned from the field and heard all the merrymaking, he asked a servant what was going on. He was told that his younger brother had returned home and that his father was delirious with joy.

The older son was consumed with a jealous rage. He refused to participate in his father’s joy. When his father urged him to participate in the festivities, he refused, whimpering that his father had never rewarded him for his faithful service and obedience. He had never been given as much as a young goat, let alone a fattened calf. He complained that when the prodigal son returned, after spending his father’s money on harlots, the father did not hesitate to make a great feast. Note that he said *“this son of yours”*, not *“my brother”*.

Let’s listen again to the Father’s answer: - *“My son,”* the father said, *“you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”*

The father’s answer indicated that there is joy connected with the restoration of a lost one, whereas an obstinate, ungrateful, unreconciled son produces no cause for celebration.

The older son is an eloquent picture of the scribes and Pharisees. They resented God’s showing mercy to outrageous sinners. To their way of thinking, if not to God’s, they had served Him faithfully, had

never transgressed His commandments, yet had never been properly rewarded for all of this. The truth of the matter was that they were religious hypocrites and guilty sinners. Their pride blinded them to their distance from God, and to the fact that he had lavished blessing after blessing upon them. If they had only been willing to repent and to acknowledge their sins, then the Father's heart would have been gladdened and they too would have been the cause of great celebration.

Application:

It was Jesus' intention to describe the attitude of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law towards tax collectors and sinners. He had been accused of welcoming such sinners and eating with them. He was made to understand that, should he associate with moral outcasts, he himself would be cut off. Jesus told this parable in which the father had the fattened calf killed and said, *"Let's have a feast and celebrate."* He wanted to show the Pharisees and teachers of the Law why he ate with tax collectors and sinners.

In the person of the prodigal son, Jesus' audience saw a picture of the moral outcasts of their day. The tax collectors and the sinners were Jews by nationality but, because of their occupation, the religious community had ostracised them. They were spiritually dead in the eyes of the law-abiding Jew. The prodigal son worked for a Gentile employer; so did the tax collector. The prodigal, however, came to his senses and returned to his parental home. Could the tax collector do likewise and return? The question Jesus put to his audience was this: *"What happens when a tax collector or moral outcast repents?"*

Jesus portrayed the love of the father for his sons in order to make it abundantly clear that God's love is infinite. His listeners recognised God in the person of the father. They knew that sin is always sin against God first and against fellowman second. How does God forgive a sinner and restore him as a member of his family? The father's attitude in the parable is representative of God's forgiving

love towards a sinner who repents. As the father said to his servants, *“Let’s have a feast and celebrate,”* so God with his angels rejoices over one sinner who repents. And as in the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, all the friends and neighbours came together to celebrate, so in the parable of the prodigal son the elder brother is invited to celebrate and be glad.

The Pharisees and teachers of the Law could not escape the intended identification. Jesus pointed his finger at them through the character of the elder brother. However, Jesus did not accuse them in any way. By means of the parable **He showed God’s genuine love and care, not only toward the repentant sinner but also toward his obedient child.** He asked the religious teachers of his day to celebrate when a social and moral outcast repents. He asked them to accept such a person in brotherly and sisterly love and to restore him or her to the religious community. Jesus presented the invitation, and the Pharisees and teachers of the Law had to make the decision.

The parable of the prodigal son proclaims the good news of the gospel. All those who have turned their backs on God, who consider the church old-fashioned and conversely, that of a permissive society up-to-date, will find a loving heavenly Father waiting for them the moment they return. There is a homecoming for them, because God is home. Although repentance is a mystery, the Christian who has loved and obeyed God must rejoice and be glad when a sinner repents. For him are the words, *“Child you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.”* That is the message for righteous people who have fought battles for the Lord, who have toiled in the heat of the day, and who have kept the faith.

From an economic point of view, modern prodigals waste millions. Today’s prodigals squander time and talents as if they are worthless. No wonder the righteous say, *“Suppose these resources could have been used in spreading the gospel and the building of God’s kingdom.”* No one can dispute this. But God is not interested in wasted time, talent, and energy – although He does not condone

misuse and loss. God is interested in the salvation of human beings. And when a modern prodigal comes to his senses and turns to God, there is joy in heaven. As heaven rejoices, so the church must celebrate and be glad when the spiritually dead come to life and the lost are found. Proclaiming the gospel of salvation and seeing sinners come to a saving knowledge of Christ must be an endless celebration of life for believers.

Finding The Lost

The Three Parables From **Luke 15**

Conclusion

- The lessons of these 3 parables is not that man is lost
- The focus is God's attitude toward the lost
 - There is a search
 - There is joy upon finding the lost **vv. 7, 10**

V7. Jesus said, *"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent."*

V10. Jesus said, *"In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

Amen.



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