

Luke 15:1-10

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[0 : 00] Let me give you a bit of a warning. I'm a little tired this morning, so I thought I would get a cup of tea. You know, tea's supposed to kind of help wake you up, kind of like coffee. Sounds right. Do I look like a tea drinker, though, first of all. I'm not really educated on tea much, but I picked up something because it said, you know, I've been drinking it.

It's been tasting good. But guess what? It's the kind of tea that makes you tired instead of, wait, cozy chamomile. Deceived by the cozy part, I thought, man, I want to feel cozy. So I drank that. So if I take a dive in the middle of this, like, that's what's going on. So just coffee from now on for me. Anyway, Luke 15. We've been working our way through some of the parables of Jesus. We took a break from going through the book of Daniel. And today we're going to embark and look at two different parables. From Luke 15. There are three altogether. But as you're aware, the third one is lengthy and deserves a lot more attention than just one Sunday morning. But just a background. Luke's gospel, the primary audience was non-Jews. It was for mainly focused toward Gentiles. Luke was a physician. Luke was a historian.

[1 : 24] And he wrote this gospel as a historical account of the life of Jesus. And later on wrote Acts. But in his mind is a Gentile audience.

Those who, by a lot of people, were seen as outsiders of the covenant. And to kind of show God's love and God's grace towards all people. And so throughout the book of Luke, there's been a few times, even before where we are now, where it says that Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem. So he's kind of making his last journey toward the city of Jerusalem where he will die on the cross. And so heavy stuff on his mind, obviously.

So we will just begin reading in chapter 15, verse 1. It says, Now the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to him.

And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, This man receives sinners and eats with them. So he told them a parable. What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?

[2 : 46] And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together all his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.

Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than the ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?

And when she has found it, she calls together her friends, her neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost. Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Let's join me in a word of prayer. Lord, we lift up this time together. I pray that we would worship through our listening, through our hearing, and then later by our obeying, by your grace.

[3 : 58] What we hear from your word today, just work in and through me to communicate the meaning and the application in a way that would be pleasing to you. Yeah, in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. So, just a little bit of the background, the introduction. This is not an unfamiliar passage for a lot of you. But first, just kind of notice that Jesus is hanging around some unruly company.

In ancient Palestine, tax collectors were representatives of the Roman authorities. They were seen as outcasts. They were seen as traitors to the nation. They often used their authority to extort and take more money than they should from their own people, not just to pay their own, but also to kind

of layer their own pockets.

It was so bad that even most Jews didn't hang out with tax collectors, not just the religious elite, but they were just seen as scumbags of society, just traitors. That's how they were viewed.

And Jesus has already kind of taken an aim at that because he has called a tax collector to be among his disciples already. So, he's kind of developing that stigma.

[5 : 10] Then it says that he was around sinners and all associated along with tax collectors. At least in the way it's being used here, it's just kind of implying to anyone who didn't follow or abide by the Mosaic law, people that didn't really take that kind of life very seriously.

And so they were associated as outsiders in a lot of ways. The Pharisees would have regarded the sinners as anyone who doesn't care about the law as they interpret it.

And it seemed to reflect a commonly understood meaning that people were guilty of public sin, but also just disinterested, disengaged from religious life as the Pharisees would have it.

And so it was culturally unacceptable for Jesus to keep with such company. He receives and welcomes sinners. If you read just in the last verse of chapter 14, Jesus says, Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

So, he knows people are listening in, particularly the religious elite. And so he welcomes sinners who have ears to hear. His concern is for the outsider, the outcast of society.

[6 : 29] So that's the unruly company, but also you notice there's the religious leaders who are there, the scribes and the Pharisees in verse 2. And they're looking on at this with great disgust.

Pharisees means separated ones. So if you want to think about it that way, they really saw themselves as extra holy.

They were the most influential of three major Jewish sects and a highly influential group. And they were known for their meticulous observance of the law, but they also had added on a lot of extra laws, extra biblical laws, laws in order to attain righteousness before God and God's favor.

They also believed that if they were righteous enough, they could possibly obtain resurrection from the dead. And so, a very religious, strict group looking on.

And the scribes are obviously those who copied the scripture, copied the law, and passed it on. So both honorable professions in the eyes of culture. It says they watched this spectacle of Jesus being with tax collectors and sinners.

[7 : 43] It says they grumbled. They murmured. They indignantly complained among themselves. They don't like what they see.

Jesus is not abiding by their rules, not behaving in their mind as a rabbi ought to behave. So what are they muttering about?

Highly agitated because he receives sinners and eats with them. So not just that he came in contact with them, but he actually was eating with them. So it's not just like they're just grabbing a meal together real quick.

It's like sharing a meal at that time meant sort of a way of expressing covenant friendship with someone. And he's there with them.

He's associating with them. Extended friendship. And they saw these people as ritually unclean. And their thinking was, we are high up here.

[8 : 41] They are way down here. We can't mix with them or else they will pollute us. They will corrupt us. In this society, such people were known as people of the land.

That's what they were referred to. So the people of dirt, kind of at the bottom of society. Peasants, unknown to God and unknown to his ways.

So there was even a rabbinical teaching. So again, this is extra biblical, not written in the law of Moses. But to the Pharisees, this is what it said. Let not a man associate with the wicked, not even to bring him closer to the law.

And how bad is that? So Jesus is doing the opposite. He could cleanse the leper rather than being made unclean by the leper. And so when he's around sinners, they don't affect him.

He affects them. So he is not defiled by them. So Jesus knows that this is what they're thinking. He hears them muttering among themselves. And just like our Lord took a time to tell a parable, parable, simple story to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson.

[9 : 57] And the intended receivers are the religious leaders. Other people are listening, of course, but he's making a point to them particularly. And he tells a parable.

Let me just think about his genius as a teacher. Men love sheep. Women, coins. Fathers love sons.

That's like what he's thinking. And so a real simple outline. And then we'll get into some more application. But number one, something lost.

Number two will be something is found. And number three, the rejoicing that results. So something lost. So the first parable, he tells about a sheep that is lost from a flock, one out of 99.

And, you know, pastors are quick to start making jokes about sheep at this point, to get people to laugh. But then you realize, that's me. So maybe we shouldn't joke about that so much.

[11:03] But yeah, sheep are not intelligent. They are prey animals. They are defenseless. They are dependent on the shepherd to lead them, feed them, protect them.

I don't know. Most of you probably really haven't been around sheep, but I have quite a bit with all my trips to Ireland and Scotland. And like, they don't camouflage well. They don't hide well.

They are ridiculous. I've had friends that own some, you know, flocks, and I've gone out to help them find some ones that were just not in the main group.

And I found one of them like, just on his back, like a turtle. I couldn't, and just, you know, filthy.

Found another one with his head stuck through a fence and his horns were just not, so you had to pull him and then twist him and then shove his head through.

Just, just ridiculous animals. But, they are prey animals. They don't hide well, but they were still a good source of not just food, but commerce, trade, financial gain for, people who owned a good herd.

[12:09] And shepherds, so they didn't call this man a shepherd, but it's implied. So, if he was hired by a master, every sheep had to be accounted for. And if he lost one, it would come out of his pay, more than likely.

But if it was his own sheep, you might be thinking like, you know, how lazy and spoiled we are today. You might just think, I've got 99, like, who cares about the one? Well, if you think that way for too long, you're not going to have a flock for too long, because that happens.

All the time. You're going to have a small flock very, very soon. So, you have to go after them, because you hold the attitude for too long, they'll be killed, they'll be eaten, they'll freeze to death, they'll starve, on and on.

So, he leaves, right? He cares for that one lost sheep. He leaves in 99, in the open country, and goes after the one that's lost. And, it's depicting kind of like a long and rigorous search over a wide area, combing the surrounding fields and hillsides to find the lost sheep.

So, that's this broad search, kind of exhausting too. So, then, you get to the parable of the woman who lost the coins. And, it's this idea of losing almost a 10 days wage for a laborer, something that is, might be referred to as her dowry coin, something that she might take with her when she gets married, into her new marriage.

[13:40] And, it's just very shameful and careless to lose them. So, the image here, not of like a woman who's fixated about money, it's just more of like, this is something precious and important to her that she wishes to hold on to, to take into, possibly, again, sort of like a marriage setting.

And, it would just be shameful to lose something like that. And so, the search isn't so much far and wide, but as we, as we read, right, she, diligently, looks for it.

And so, her search is more thorough and diligent. She turns on a light to look, or turns on a lamp, excuse me. You don't turn on a lamp, do you? You light a lamp. But, it's a diligent and thorough search.

And, I know, again, this would be a point where you just make a lot of jokes about things you've lost, but don't have time to do that. But, I've lost keys, lost wallet, kind of do it, do it frequently. Sometimes, like, I think my wallet just grows legs and walks away, and I don't know where it is at all.

I have a map that says, keys, phone, wallet, right, walking out of my door to help me remember. So, yeah, we lose a lot of things, but it can make you feel embarrassed, shameful, and even panic with fear a little bit, if it's something very serious that you need.

[15:00] So, something is lost. Secondly, something is found. So, the man's searching paid off, as we read, and when he has found it, he lays, right, the sheep on his shoulders, in verse 5, rejoicing.

A picture of a loving, caring shepherd. The sheep is too weak to return on its own, so he throws it over his shoulders. He's probably injured, dehydrated, scared, and he takes it back to save pasture, to be with the rest of the flock, and he's rejoicing.

He isn't like, you know, cussing, as he's like taking the sheep back, but he's like happy that he found this lost sheep. And so, for the woman, it's the same thing. When she finds the coin, she is very happy.

She is overflowing with joy. Her money is intact, and she's not going to be embarrassed, or ashamed anymore. And so, that leads to the third point, just the rejoicing that results.

When the man brings the sheep back, he shares the joy with his friends and his neighbors. And you see that in verse 6. When he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep that was lost.

[16:19] And so, this is a picture of true joy. Christ-centered joy is meant, designed to spill over onto other people.

It's not meant to be hoarded. I mean, think about some of the most joyful things that have happened in your life. Most of you, unless you're very odd, like you like to let people know about the joy that you are undergoing, especially the ones that are closest to you.

So, that joy shared is a way to fulfilling it, right? You have to. And with the coins, it says, when she had found it, she called together her friends, her neighbors, saying, rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.

Her joy, likewise, has to be, has to, you know, overflow to other people to be made full. Those are the closest to them. So, that's a simple outline.

Some of it was lost, some of it was found. And then there's rejoicing that takes place. So, the application of this, here's a few things for us. But one is, Jesus is trying to get his audience to understand that God cares for sinners, unlike the religious leaders that were around him.

[17:39] He says that God Almighty cares deeply about the lost sinners. Jesus is telling, you know, about the attitude of our Heavenly Father towards those who repent.

So, as you're aware, repent means to turn away from sin, turn to God. It means, really, a changing of one's mind toward sin.

So, not that just you hate doing something, but now, I mean, excuse me, like you don't hate just the consequences of your actions, but you hate what you do. Like you hated the sin that you committed.

And, that change of mind leads to a change in action. And so, as we turn to God in faith, to save us. So, these are images of God's joy and the restoration of a sinner through repentance.

And this is just very different in their mind, like God does not act this way. But, Psalm 103, as a father, shows compassion, compassion, to his children.

[18:41] So, the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame. He remembers that we are by dust. He takes pity on us.

He knows that we are weak. So, he has compassion for us. In Matthew 9, very similar situation. But, Matthew 9, verse 11, the Pharisees saw what Jesus was doing. And they say, why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? When he heard it, he said, those who are well have no need of a physician.

But those who are sick, go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I came not to call righteous, the righteous, but sinners.

And so, he quotes from Hosea 6. He's like, yeah, well, go read your scripture, basically. Go read your Bible and read this, where God says, I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

[19:48] That was the heart of the gospel, but that threatened their way of thinking and sacrifice, kind of, all the different things that you do to observe the law, the religious law.

And God's steadfast love is what God cares about. He wants to show that to sinners. And he's saying that, like, your attitude is different than God's. God desires and seeks sinners.

That kind of leads to this other thing, right? If you notice in the story, what Jesus is trying to tell them is God is the one who initiates. He is the one who seeks. He is the one who finds.

It's not, it's not, it's not that God is just kind of hanging out and we have to work our way toward Him to reach a level of favor with Him.

He actually comes out and gets us. That's awesome news. God hunts us down. And you won't find anybody in the Bible that was just kind of, you know, not found by God.

[20:53] God found them. And He pursued them. It's not within the nature of fallen man to desire God. We don't seek after God.

That's Romans 3, right? There are none righteous, no, not one. No one understands and no one seeks for God. We all have turned aside and together have become worthless, right? And that idea of Isaiah connecting to the sheep. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each to his own way.

So, God is the one who takes the initiative and He pursues the lost center. He is viewed in Scripture as a shepherd, right?

So, Ezekiel 34, verse 15, this is God talking, I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God.

[21 : 56] I will seek the lost and I will bring back the stray and I will bind up the injured and I will strengthen the weak. That's God's attitude towards lost sinners.

And one of my favorite passages in the New Testament, Romans 5, is to explain the gospel. It said, God, while we were still helpless, while we were weak, nothing we could do on our own.

It says, God demonstrated His great love towards us by sending Christ. So, that's our condition, but God sought us and so that's the image of Him in these parables.

But also, the joy of heaven is contrasted with like the grumbling of the Pharisees. He's telling them like there is serious, holy, pure joy that erupts in heaven when a sinner comes to saving faith.

And He says that. I'm telling you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than other 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.

[23 : 04] About that last part, that doesn't mean there actually are people who don't need to repent. It just means that they're not aware of their need to repent. It doesn't mean that they're sinless, but rather, they've wrongly deceived themselves into thinking that they are righteous, thus not feeling the need for repentance.

While you're in Luke, go to Luke 5 really quickly. Let's rewind. Luke 5, verse 30. So, this isn't the first time this has kind of happened.

Luke 5, verse 30. It says, the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples saying, why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?

And Jesus answered them, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

And so, listen to this. you cannot hear Jesus unless you know that you need him. If God is stirring in your heart and your soul and making you aware of your sin and the weight of it and the guilt of it, and he is making you aware that you are sick and that you need him, the great physician.

[24 : 28] So, if you're aware you're sick, aware of your sin, you're aware of your need for deliverance, right? So, he's saying there is great joy in heaven that takes place.

Great celebration. And so, some closing thoughts on this. We all need a very clear warning. Beware of being like the Pharisees and the scribes who do not rejoice over finding what is lost, who consider themselves holier, better, cleaner, set apart, and so that we are quick to look upon others and say, not that guy, not that girl.

And you can, the attitude of like, hey, if you can clean up, you can get yourself together, you can come to our thing. But, you don't look like us, so beat it. And, that is not the approach that Jesus exercised.

And there are many in the church who are like that. One of my mom's best friends was very much like that. And a part of her testimony now is she actually, she shares, like, I was the older brother. I was the one who thought I was better than everybody else. And, until God made me realize that my righteousness was filthy before him. And so, beware of thinking in that way and that people are going to be excluded from God's kingdom just because they don't act and look like you.

[26 : 02] Here's one that is sad, but you got to say it today. Beware of wrongly motivated evangelism. Some of you are thinking like, hmm, tax collectors and sinners, that's kind of the crowd I like to hang out with.

So, I'll just kind of covertly go in under the name of I'm going to like do ministry in there. But, deep down, you actually are just worshiping the idols of social acceptance, of partying, and you just want to blend in.

And, it's really not about Jesus. It's about you. And, it's about you worshiping your idols. So, beware of like, hiding under that guise. Like, yeah, that's my crowd.

I'd rather spend time with anyway. I'll just say I'm just doing some evangelism while I'm there. But, deep down, I'm really just pursuing sin. So, don't see that as an excuse to go and be in those places

necessarily.

Beware of that. Ask yourself, why are you there? To influence others for Christ and to look like you're doing something there or just secretly worshiping your idols?

[27 : 09] Who is influencing who? Why are you there? And, two more thoughts, we're done. God is seeking you. No matter where you are, if you're aware of your sin, aware of who you are, and aware of what you deserve, know that God stands ready with open arms to receive you.

Does that like, do your heart good to know that God is welcoming, that His arms are open, that He's not, you know, snarling down at you and despising you? But He is ready to display His lavish love upon repentant sinners.

1 Timothy 1, verse 15, Paul says this, has a hope of enticing or showing people the great mercy of God. He says, this is a trustworthy saying, deserving of full acceptance.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I receive mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience as example to those who are to believe in Him for eternal life, to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, the honor and glory forever and ever.

So, God is seeking you. And for many of us, we have been found. We don't need to forget where we were before we were found. And, if you wish to partake in the joy in heaven, like what believer doesn't want to do that?

[28 : 50] Do you wish to partake of the joy of heaven? Then you must seek lost sinners. There's no other way around it. This is a big deal in heaven.

So, if God has sought us, we must be willing and desirous to seek others that are outside the fold of God and to bring them in. And, again, they don't always look like us, talk like us, have their stuff together, and that's all right.

One of the guys in my earlier Christian life that the Lord humbly used me and a couple others to bring him to faith, his name was Joe.

And Joe was like a heavy metal dude. He was like, he had like long hair, big stout guy, and he played the drums and where the hair, you know, going, like that's, that was him. And he was like into, you know, Pearl Jam, Smashing Pumpkins, like those old 90s rock groups.

And he was mind blown that Christ would care for him. Mind blown. And he was, he looked very different, obviously, than a lot of people that we were hanging out with in that church setting.

[30 : 03] But I just love to see the old ladies at our church would just come up and just give this guy a hug and just say, we love you. We're glad that you're here. But Joe cannot believe that God cared for him.

It was just like, he just kind of got stuck on that one point. God cares for me and the Lord saved him. And so, go and seek the lost. It's the most beautiful mysteries of scripture that a holy God would have the desire to draw near to individuals like you and me and to not despise them.

So, let's pray together.