

a deeper dive

INTO YOUR FAVORITE BIBLE STORIES

12 – Joy Comes in The Finding – The Lost Son (*The Prodigal Son*)

Text: Luke 15:1-35

THE CENTRAL THEME: *Desperation melts into extreme joy when something lost is found.*

In Chapter 15 of Luke’s gospel Jesus responds to the information given in the first two verses with three successive parables.

(The Greek word for parable is *parabola* - which signifies placing beside or together, a comparison. A parable, then, is literally placing an illustration beside a truth for the purpose of making a comparison).

“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:1-2 ESV)

The Pharisees continually criticized Jesus’ association with the members of society commonly regarded as sinful and unrepentant.

A later rabbinic saying “Let not a man associate with the wicked, not even to bring him to the Law” sums up their attitude.

Jesus had made his intentions clear earlier in His encounters with the Pharisees:

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:31–32)

Remember it is Jesus’ greatest desire to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

“So, He told them this parable:” (Luke 15:3)

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The lost sheep and the lost coin were contemporary comparisons that would have satisfied Jesus' point about the Joy of Heaven's angels over the lost being discovered, reclaimed, restored!

It seems that Jesus was baiting His naysayers with the first two comparisons and then delivering the spiritual punch with the longer, more personally relatable parable – The Prodigal Son, as we traditionally have named it.

The story of the Lost Son has deeper implications for everyone regardless of people's social status, ethnicity, economic condition, or spiritual bias.

Let's look at the parable and sort out the truths for us this morning.

The Lost Son – Luke 15:11-32

A Restless Age

And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.

Stubborn Pride

¹⁴ And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

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Dawning of Truth

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father...”

Need for Reconciliation

I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”

Pursuit of Repentance

²⁰ And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”

Joy of restoration

²² But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

Forgiveness – What it Feels Like from the Outside Looking In

The last section of this parable deals with the defensive attitude of the elder brother.

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ But he was angry and refused to go in. His

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father came out and entreated him, ²⁹ but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!'

“Where’s MY ‘young goat’?” says the dependable, ever-present, and reliable son.

Are we so jealous that we cannot share in the joy of forgiveness and inclusion for others?

The problem for the older son is this, HE didn’t feel betrayed when his brother took off. He had nothing to forgive.

- He might have felt a little special. A sole heir to the land! More food at the table. No more hassles in the home dealing with the restless younger son.
- Like the Pharisees, he could not comprehend the meaning of forgiveness.

The father, however, remains constant in his love for both.

³¹ And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³² It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'

Forgiveness is an extension of the love of God that’s been poured into your life.

Ephesians 4:32 says, *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

Jesus said, *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?” (Matthew 5:44-46)*