



Rejoicing When the Lost Is Found Luke 15

Introduction

Losses can be painful, tragic, and devastating. Much time and effort can be given to finding a lost item, particularly if it is something of sentimental or material value. Luke Chapter 15 tells of a shepherd's quest for a lost sheep, a woman's search for a lost coin, and a father's love for precious lost sons.

Outline of Luke 15

- I. Preaching to the Crowd- Luke 15:1-2
- II. Parable of a Lost Sheep - Luke 15:3-7
- III. Parable of a Lost Coin - Luke 15:8-10
- IV. Parable of Lost Sons - Luke 15:11-32

I. Preaching to the Crowd - Luke 15:1-2

Jesus spoke these parables to a divided audience. He was accustomed to different types of hearers. Some heard Him gladly and eagerly, sensing His authenticity and love. They hung on His words. They were mostly the poor and needy, the hurting and outcasts, although there were some who were privileged and wealthy.

A. Tax Collectors and Sinners - 15:1

The first group mentioned is tax collectors and sinners, the outcasts of society. But they are the ones who *drew near to hear Him*

B. Pharisees and Scribes - 15:2

The other group is represented by the Pharisees and scribes, experts in the Law of Moses. They had been envious, resentful, and hostile toward Jesus from the beginning of His ministry (John 2:18; 4:1-3; 5:10,16). Yet, they were the religious elite, the leaders in a nation that regarded itself as obedient to the Scriptures. They appeared to keep the letter of the Law but ignored and violated its spirit of mercy and compassion.

Nowhere was their opposition to Jesus and His purpose more evident than in their attitude toward the lost. Jesus spoke these parables in yet another attempt to reach them.

II. Parable of a Lost Sheep - Luke 15:3-7

A. A Question Concerning the Lost - Luke 15:4

"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in

the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?" Jesus gave examples they would clearly understand. A lost sheep meant lost income, as well as a lost possession. Shepherds know their sheep. They may even know each one by name, as our Good Shepherd does (John 10:3). The loss of one out of a hundred might seem insignificant unless each one was important. To the Good Shepherd it would be important if it were one out of a million or six billion. Each one is important. You are important to Him. How important is your Shepherd to you?

B. The Good Shepherd - Luke 15:5

When a shepherd was aware that a sheep was lost, he went after it until he found it. Then, rejoicing, he put it on his shoulders and carried it safely all the way home. The lost sheep received a privileged position close to the shepherd, "*he lays it on his shoulders*" (see also Deuteronomy 33:12). Jesus called Himself the Shepherd and His people the sheep (John 10:11). Like sheep we stray from the fold until the Great Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, finds us (Hebrews 13:20). This is expressed in several hymns, such as "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" written by Henry W. Baker in 1868. He wrote of the Shepherd seeking His sheep.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
And then in love He sought me.
And on His shoulders gently laid,
And home rejoicing brought me.

Elizabeth Clephane (1830-1869) wrote of the Shepherd finding the sheep in "The Ninety and Nine".

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord
passed through
'Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Then all through the mountains thunder
riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There arose a glad cry to the gates of heaven
Rejoice, I have found My sheep.

C. The Glad Shepherd - Luke 15:6-7

The shepherd called his friends and neighbors to share his joy. What do you do with good news? Do you share it as soon as possible? Have you shared the good news of someone lost spiritually being found?

1. Rejoice

"Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." This is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking, in the parable, but also in reality, as 15:7 goes on to say.

2. Joy in heaven

"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." "Just" means "upright", and it means upright in one's own eyes. But the Scriptures say, *For there is none who does good, ... no not one* (Psalm 14:1-3). *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). However, the emphasis here is on the sinner who repents and the response in heaven. Is there comparable joy on earth? Do you rejoice when the lost sheep of your family or neighborhood turns to Christ as his or her Savior, or when an enemy does, or a criminal on death row? Do you believe a "respectable" sinner is just as much a sinner as a notorious, abhorrent sinner? When either one repents there is joy in heaven.

III. Parable of a Lost Coin - Luke 15:8-10

A. Seeking the Lost - Luke 15:8

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it" (NASB)? Jesus included women in seeking the lost. The lost item was a silver coin, a drachma, one of ten.

In the previous parable, the action is out in the wilderness. The shepherd is daring and self-sacrificing. Here the action is in a home, a lamp is lit, the floor swept, as the woman makes a careful search, sifting through every bit of debris for the valuable coin.

B. Rejoicing over the Found - Luke 15:9

Her search is rewarded. The coin is found and the relieved woman calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, "*Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!*"

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Again, the point is the ethereal joy over one sinner who repents.

IV. Parable of Lost Sons - Luke 15:11-32

A. A Certain Man's Two Sons - Luke 15:11-32

This parable is called The Prodigal Son, and like the Good Samaritan, is one of Jesus' best-known parables.

It has more to the plot than the other two parables in this chapter. There is the wayward younger son, who, in a sense, finds himself. Circumstances cause his repentance. There is a forgiving father who is lavish in rejoicing over the lost son's return. But there is an added ingredient, the petulant older brother who had hidden problems laying unnoticed until the crisis revealed them.

1. The prodigal son - 15:12-18

The prodigal was the younger of two sons. We are not told how old he was when he decided that he wanted to leave home, but his request of his father is shocking. Although not entitled to any of his inheritance until his father was dead, the younger son asked for his share. John MacArthur ([MacArthur Bible Commentary](#)) points out that this was tantamount to saying he wished his father were dead.

a. The wasted life - verses 13-16

The younger son left home and "*journeyed to a far country.*" There he recklessly squandered all of his father's money. About the time his money ran out, a famine spread through the land. Having nothing, the young man was fortunate to find a job feeding swine. "*And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.*" To those Jews hearing the parable, the young man feeding swine signified the absolute epitome of degradation. Swine were considered among the worst of the unclean animals.

b. Coming to his senses - verses 17-19

Having hit rock bottom, the prodigal son finally "*came to himself.*" He remembered home where even the hired servants had plenty to eat. He admitted his sin toward God and his father and decided to return and ask his father to take him on as a hired servant.

2. The compassionate father - 15:20-21

The father must have been watching for his son to return. Perhaps he sat daily by the window with his eyes on the road leading to the house, perhaps praying for his son. How his heart must have jumped for joy at the sight of him! "*When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*" God is like the father. No matter how greatly we have sinned, God the Father has compassion, or mercy, on us. God will go the distance to receive back a penitent sinner. *For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn His face from you if you return to Him* (2 Chronicles 30:9).

3. The celebration - 15:22-24

The confession and repentance of the prodigal son was reason for celebration. His father called for the best robe to be brought and the fatted calf to be killed. The dead was alive again and the lost was found. "*And they began to be merry.*"

The parable should end here with the calling of friends and neighbors to share the joy. But the plot line is disrupted. The merriment has just begun, and no mention is made of joy in heaven.

4. The angry son - 15:25-32

"*Now the older son was in the field.*" We might say he was "out in left field", or far afield. Suspicious of the scents of roasting meat and the sounds of music, he was like some who have been described as "afraid that someone somewhere might be having a good time". Instead of hurrying to join in the celebration, he asked for second-hand information from one of the servants.

a. Resentful - verses 29-30

When he heard the story of the return of his younger brother, he was angry and would not go in. "*Therefore his father went out and pleaded with him.*" The father went to the older son to seek him as one who was lost. But the young man only tried to justify his behavior. He showed neither repentance for his resentment nor compassion for his brother. The father explained, "*It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead, and is alive again, was lost and is found.*"

b. Unrepentant

The parable ends with the older son unmerciful toward his restored brother and unrepentant despite his father's pleading. Who was lost?

B. Meaning of the Parables

1. The lost items

A case can be made for the fact that in each parable the lost item belonged originally in the fold or home.

We do not want to push that too far, for parables are not meant to teach doctrine, nor to be strained for details. They are meant to apply a point to the lives of the hearers. The items and the people in the parables were genuinely lost, potentially forever, unless found.

2. The seeker of lost souls

In each parable there was a person who sought the lost: the shepherd, the woman, and the father.

In the parables, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Father are represented. The Son is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. The Holy Spirit is the cleansing agent and the one who reveals our lost condition. The Father forgives and restores. The Triune God, therefore, is compassionate, merciful, forgiving, and initiates the pursuit of sinners.

3. The unmerciful Pharisees

The hard-hearted hearers had no interest in rescuing lost sheep, and would not lift a finger to do so. They were not even cleaning their own houses in search of lost valuables. They cared nothing about brother, or sister, the Israelites, or their need. They were like the older son, self-righteous, unmerciful, and unrepentant.

Applications

1. How much do you care about people who are lost and face eternity lost? Will you choose to share God's compassion with lost sinners? Will you tell them about the Good Shepherd who loves them?
2. Do you know someone who has wandered away from the fold? Who will you contact by phone, letter, or in person to help bring them back? If you were that person would you want to know someone cared?
3. Will you cooperate with the Holy Spirit in searching for a lost "coin", someone God values? Who is there perhaps in your very home, family circle, school, neighborhood, or business who needs to be found?
4. Are you more like the younger son, the older son, or the father? Are you God-like in welcoming wayward people? Or, are you unsympathetic, judgmental, uncaring, and unwilling to celebrate their acceptance into the family of God?

QUESTIONS

Questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read lesson notes and references.

1. What was a new thought to you in the lesson or lecture?

2. a. What action have you ever taken to reach someone who is lost?

b. What do you think God might have you do to reach the lost?

3. ♥(Heart Question) How were you reached and “found” when you were a lost sinner?

DAY TWO: Luke 16:1-8.

4. a. To whom did Jesus speak?

b. Is what Jesus tells them called a parable? Compare Luke 15:3.

5. Why was the rich man displeased with his steward?

6. a. What was the steward told to do?

b. What fear did the steward have?

c. What did he actually do?

7. How did the rich man respond to the steward’s actions?

DAY THREE: Read Luke 16:9-13.

8. ?(Thought Questions) a. What do you think Jesus meant in the last sentence in 16:8?

b. Who are children of this world? Who are children of light? See John 12:36 and Ephesians 5:8.

c. List some ways in which unbelievers seem more shrewd than believers.

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9. a. What good use of money is recommended in 16:9?
- b. What is the purpose?
- c. How do the following passages from Proverbs apply to this situation?
Proverbs 17:8
Proverbs 18:16
Proverbs 21:14
10. Give three tests of character found in Luke 16:10-12.
11. a. What are the two masters in 16:13?
- b. Why can we not serve them both?
- c. Which one is meant to serve us?

DAY FOUR: Read Luke 16:14-17.

12. a. What bit of information is given about the Pharisees?
- b. What did this do to their character (1 Timothy 6:10)?
13. a. From Luke 16:15, what two facts are we told about God?
- b. ? (Thought Question) List some things that are highly esteemed among men that might be abominations to God.
14. What would be easier than for "*one tittle of the law to fail*"? Give verse.

DAY FIVE: Read Luke 16:18; Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11. (Opinions differ on this important issue. See for yourself what these verses say and try to come to some conclusion.)

15. Why did Moses allow divorce (Mark 10:5)?
16. What Scripture did Jesus appeal to? Why? See Mark 10:6-8.

17. a. What two situations does Jesus mention in 16:18?

b. What more do you learn from Matthew 19:3-12?

c. What do you learn from 1 Corinthians 7:10-11?

DAY SIX: Read Luke 16:19-31.

18. a. What do we learn about the lives of the two men in 16:19-21?

b. How did their destinies reverse after death in 16:22-23?

19. If Jesus is teaching about life after death, give one fact from each of the following verses.

a. Luke 16:24

b. Luke 16:25

c. Luke 16:26

20. a. What did the rich man deeply desire to happen?

b. What was Abraham's answer? Give verse.

21. What two things are of equal weight and value in 16:30-31?