



First Baptist Church Selmer

TRANSFORMED: FROM DEATH TO LIFE TO ABUNDANT LIFE • RECONCILIATION •
LUKE 15:1-7 • 6/23/2024

MAIN POINT

Jesus reconciled us back to a right relationship with God through His sacrificial death on the cross.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most expensive or most valuable thing you have ever lost?

Whether a toy from your childhood, your homework, an important document on your computer, a family heirloom, a wedding ring, a watch, a child, or an important relationship, losing things and people important to us cause many emotions. Grief. Anger. Depression. Pain. Often, though, losing something important gives us great motivation to try and find it again.

What steps did you take to try and find what you had lost?

Did you find it? Whether the answer is yes or no, what was your response?

Perhaps you know firsthand the scenario of turning over everything in your home looking for that one lost thing that weighs so heavy on your heart. We will go to great lengths to find what we have lost. If we don't find it, the hurt remains; it may even last for a lifetime, depending upon what was lost. But if we do find what was lost, then the joy is unimaginable.

We will look today at a parable Jesus told about a lost sheep, giving us a glimpse into the heart of God for the spiritually lost. The heavens rejoice when a lost sinner is found, an

experience which Jesus summarized with the word *“repent.”* So in this study of Luke 15:1-7, we will look at how repentance leads to our necessary reconciliation back to God.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 15:1-2.

1 "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.'" (ESV)

What were the thoughts of the Pharisees and scribes about tax collectors and sinners?

Why would they take issue with such people coming to Jesus and being welcomed by Him?

The Pharisees and scribes were the law-abiding, religious elite in Jewish life. They strived to obey God’s law to the letter, thinking this earned them favor with God. So they had a favorable view of themselves, but for tax collectors and sinners, they looked down upon them as those who could not or would not live up to their standard. Tax collectors and sinners were those who betrayed their people and betrayed God with their sinful choices. Therefore, in the eyes of the Pharisees and scribes, they were to be shunned.

Yet Jesus, a respected teacher of God’s law, graciously welcomed these very people when they came to listen to His teachings. He even ate meals with them. In this, the truly righteous Jesus shunned the *“righteous”* Pharisees and identified Himself with lowly sinners. Jesus came to save sinners so that they would repent of their sin and be reconciled to Him through faith.

The Pharisees failed to see Jesus as the righteous Son of God so they rejected Him; the tax collectors and sinners recognized in Him the love and grace of God, and they flocked to His presence, demonstrating a repentant heart.

How can we sometimes view others in the same way as the Pharisees?

How can looking to our own righteousness, instead of coming to Jesus, show us just how sinful and lost we really are?

In response to the Pharisees and scribes complaining about Jesus' welcoming sinners into His presence and to His table, Jesus told them a parable about a lost sheep.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 15:3-4.

3 "So he told them this parable: 4 '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?'" (ESV)

Leaving ninety-nine sheep in the field to search for the one lost sheep may seem reckless to us. Did Jesus expect the Pharisees and scribes to relate to the shepherd's decision in the parable?

It is clear from Jesus' words that He expected the Pharisees and scribes to relate to the scenario of His parable: one lost sheep was worth searching for, even at the risk of the ninety-nine left in the open field.

Why might people in that time have gone to search for even one missing sheep?

Sheep were extremely valuable to Jews because of the sacrificial system of the day, and the Pharisees were the people of the Law! Sheep were also a source of food and clothing as well as to the economy of the Jewish nation.

What does the pursuit of one lost sheep communicate about the owner of the sheep?

What does the pursuit of even one lost sinner communicate about the heart of God?

The gospel, or the good news of Jesus Christ, is that God sent His one and only Son to save sinners from their sin and its consequences. God, in Christ, pursues lost sinners to rescue them from this present evil age (see Gal. 1:3-4). In light of God's love and grace toward us, we should repent of our sin and be reconciled through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 15:5-7.

5 *"And when he has found it, he lays 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, for I have found my sheep that was lost." 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."* (ESV)

Take a moment and share some things with your group today that are worth rejoicing about this morning.

How do your answers help you begin to understand the joy in heaven when a sinner repents?

Some answers that cause us to rejoice could include birthdays, graduation from high school or college, a wedding, the birth of a child, an anniversary, and holidays. Other answers may be less obvious and more unique to each person. Still, we all have an innate desire to rejoice in good circumstances and even to share that joy with others.

Jesus told us in this parable that heaven rejoices over a sinner who repents in contrast to *"righteous"* people who don't need repentance. The irony of this statement is that *"there is no one righteous"* (Rom. 3:10). There is no rejoicing in heaven over the *"righteous"* who don't need to repent because there is no such person. But the repentance of a sinner turns that person away from their sin and back to our loving God. Heaven rejoices at this news, and so too should the repentant sinner, who recognizes God's presence in Christ and realizes His gracious and loving pursuit to save sinners!

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are some ways we can enjoy the presence of God in Christ more and more as we grow in the faith of Christ?

Consider how God pursued you in Christ through His Word and other believers. How can you continue that pursuit in your home, workplace, and community in the presence of other sinners?

Of what do you need to repent in order to be reconciled with God the Father?

PRAYER

Thank the Father for sending His Son to pursue us even in our sin, and thank Him for reconciling us to Him through the cross, giving His life for ours. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of your sin so that you may repent of it. Ask His Spirit to strengthen you to share this good news with others.

COMMENTARY

| LUKE 15:1-7

15:1. Jesus had just described heaven as a banquet for the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. He had told the rich banquet hosts to invite such people to their feasts, not seeking repayment. Naturally, such people found Jesus and his teaching attractive. They wanted to hear more and to see what Jesus would do for them.

15:2. Meanwhile, the religious experts also maintained their watch, hoping to trap Jesus (11:53; 14:1). They continually chided him: Why do you associate with these kinds of people? Do you not know their reputation? They will ruin you. Get away from them. You are becoming unclean.

15:3-6. Jesus' parables, at first meant to reveal the mysteries of God's kingdom to the disciples and to conceal them from the crowds, have now become tools to teach the opponents (cf. 14:15-16). This parable retains its character as a story, but it is placed in the interrogative mood. The listeners become participants, characters in the story, and must choose a course of action. The story turns the self-righteous, ritually clean scribes and Pharisees into dirty shepherds involved in an occupation that constantly makes them unclean (see commentary on 2:8-12). The rabbis regarded shepherds—along with gamblers, tax collectors, camel drivers, and sailors—as despised, evil, thieving occupations.

15:7. That is what heaven is like. Ninety-nine self-righteous people who keep all the rituals, festivals, and rules bring no joy to heaven. One sinner confessing his sin and repenting sets off a party in heaven. God is concerned about the lost who will admit they are lost and turn back to him. He wants people to put the sinful life behind them and follow him. Pharisees never do this. Why? They never realize they are lost! They always count themselves among the saved, even though they have never repented of their sins.