

THE LOST SHEEP, THE LOST COIN, AND THE PRODIGAL SON

[BIBLE TEXT](#) : Luke 15:1-32

LESSON 150 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

Luke 15:1-32

¹ Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

² And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

³ And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

⁴ What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?

⁵ And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

⁶ And when he cometh home, he calleth together *his* friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

⁷ I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

⁸ Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find *it*?

⁹ And when she hath found *it*, she calleth *her* friends and *her* neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

¹⁰ Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

¹¹ And he said, A certain man had

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

I The Parable of the Lost Sheep

1 The publicans and sinners draw near, and the Pharisees and scribes murmur, Luke 15:1, 2;

Luke 19:7

⁷ And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.

2 Jesus tells of the shepherd's leaving the ninety and nine to search for the lost sheep until it is found, Luke 15:3, 4;

Luke 19:10

¹⁰ For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

3 Friends and neighbors rejoice when the shepherd returns with the sheep on his shoulders, Luke 15:5, 6;

Psalms 126:6

⁶ He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

4 Likewise there is rejoicing in Heaven over one penitent sinner more than over ninety and nine just persons, Luke 15:7

II The Parable of the Lost Coin

1 A woman, having ten coins, loses one, and seeks until she finds it, Luke 15:8

2 She rejoices with her friends and neighbors, saying, "I have found the piece which I had lost," Luke 15:9

3 Likewise there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner that repents, Luke 15:10;

Revelation 7:11-12

¹¹ And all the angels stood round about the throne, and *about* the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

¹² Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, *be* unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

III The Prodigal Son in the Far Country

1 He asks for his portion of goods, and the father divides to his sons his living, Luke 15:11, 12

2 He departs into the far country and wastes his substance with riotous living, Luke 15:13;

Isaiah 53:6

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

3 He spends all; a famine arises; he is in want; and feeds swine for a living, Luke 15:14, 15

4 He would gladly feed on the swine's husks, and no man gives unto him, Luke 15:16

IV His Purpose to Return to His Father's House

1 He comes to himself and thinks of his father's hired servants with bread and to spare, Luke 15:17

2 He purposes to return and confess that he has sinned against Heaven and before his father, Luke 15:18

3 Confessing that he is unworthy to be called a son, he will ask to be made a hired servant, Luke 15:19

two sons:

¹² And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth *to me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.

¹³ And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

¹⁴ And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

¹⁵ And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

¹⁶ And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

¹⁷ And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

¹⁹ And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

²⁰ And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

²¹ And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

²² But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

²³ And bring hither the fatted calf,

V The Love Bestowed by the Father upon Him

1 He arises and comes, and while the son is a great way off, the father runs, and embraces and kisses him, Luke 15:20

2 He confesses his sins and unworthiness to be called a son, but his "confession" is interrupted, Luke 15:21;

1 John 3:1

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

3 The father commands the best robe, a ring, and shoes to be put upon him, Luke 15:22;

1 John 1:9

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

4 He orders the fatted calf killed, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again," Luke 15:23, 24;

John 11:25

²⁵ Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

VI The Anger of the Elder Brother

1 He heard the music and dancing, and calling a servant he asked what it meant, Luke 15:25, 26

2 The servant explained that his brother had come, the fatted calf was killed and they were making merry, Luke 15:27

3 He was angry and would not go in, and his father came out and intreated him, Luke 15:28;

Matthew 22:4

⁴ Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and *my* fatlings *are* killed, and all things *are* ready: come unto the marriage.

4 He complained that he had served his father and kept his commandments, yet the father had never made merry for him, Luke 15:29

5 As soon as his son came who had wasted his living in sin, for him he killed the fatted calf, Luke 15:30;

Proverbs 30:12

¹² *There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.*

6 "It was meet that we should make merry, ... for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again," Luke 15:31, 32;

Psalms 133:1

¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!

NOTES:

Three worlds are stirred when a repentant sinner in sorrow of heart pleads forgiveness and the answer comes, "Son, thy sins which are many are all forgiven." Heaven knows of the event, and the angels of God rejoice; the news is spread, and the redeemed on earth rejoice; and the demons in hell gnash their teeth. Satan has lost another victim!

The Lost Sheep

Jesus told this parable of the lost sheep to picture the joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." That is just how concerned even the angels of God are in the salvation of a soul. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14). The angels themselves have a part in ushering the re-

and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry:

²⁴ For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

²⁵ Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

²⁶ And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

²⁷ And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

²⁸ And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

²⁹ And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

³⁰ But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

³¹ And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

³² It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

deemed into that heavenly Kingdom. And they not only know of, but are deeply concerned in, the salvation of souls here below. So far as we know, they may form a part of that great "cloud of witnesses" which compasses us about in this Christian race. (**Hebrews 12:1** ¹ Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us).

A lost sheep is a particularly fitting type of a lost soul. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). About the most helpless animal known is a sheep that has strayed away from the flock. He cannot find his way back. He is utterly helpless and will fall a victim in the desert to the vultures and wild beasts, unless someone comes to his rescue. And this the shepherd knows. So leaving the ninety and nine he searches in the wilds until he hears the bleating of the lost sheep; and making his way down a rocky steep, he succeeds in reaching with his shepherd's crook the fainting animal as a vulture circles overhead. Placing the precious burden on his shoulders, the shepherd with joy returns to the fold.

Jesus is the good Shepherd. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." His great mission to this sin-cursed world was the salvation of sinners. Some sinners who have turned to their own way are confident that they are able to take care of themselves, but no man yet who has sought to make his own salvation has ever found his way into the fold. He, like the lost sheep, has wandered helplessly in the desert. It is only when he realizes his lost, undone condition, and calls for help, that the good Shepherd comes to his rescue, and brings him home safe to the fold.

The good Shepherd endured the contradiction of sinners, the persecutions of enemies, and at last yielded up His life on Calvary's Cross to provide a safe fold for His sheep and bring them within its gate. He said to His disciples, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

**"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.
Out in the desert He heard its cry —
Sick and helpless, and ready to die."**

The Lost Coin

The parable of the lost coin also brings out the thought of the rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents. The value of this coin is enhanced by an interpretation which some Bible students apply to this parable. In ancient times certain coins were given a young woman as tokens of her virginity. And she would keep them as precious tokens. It is obvious, therefore, with what anxiety she would search her house for that lost coin, and sweep every corner until the coin was found; and rejoice with her friends and relatives when at last it was recovered. And the coin itself is likewise typical of a lost soul, for a lost coin in time becomes tarnished and the image and superscription are effaced. So through sin in the Garden of Eden the image of God was lost in which man was created, and a sinner's only hope of its restoration is through salvation in Jesus Christ who is "the brightness of his glory. and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3).

The Prodigal Son

But the crowning thought of this chapter is found in the

narrative of the prodigal son. "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living." Since this account is not termed a parable, it may be a narrative of actual events, as in the case of Lazarus and the rich man. At any rate, it reveals some of the most profound truths exhibited in the Gospel.

In the Far Country

No law of the land compelled this father to divide his property. In those days the authority of the head of a house was supreme. But he consented to the wishes of his son, and "divided unto them his living." "And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country." This young man left father and home, not because there was any lack, for even the hired servants had "bread enough and to spare"; but he, like the great majority of the younger generation, chafed under the restraint and tameness of the home, and he wished to see "what the far country had to offer." The "far country" was likely Egypt, which is a type of the world. And spiritually, as well as geographically, "Egypt" was far, far away from his father's house, for it abounded in iniquity into which the prodigal son delved, for there he "wasted his substance with riotous living."

How true was this young man's character, like the vast majority of men, to the words of the prophet: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"! And how different was he from the small minority of men like Moses who chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season! "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13, 14).

The Famine in the Land

The prodigal son may have enjoyed the pleasures of sin, but it was only "for a season." "When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land." Sin, as he discovered, has a "kickback." For soon he began to be in want, and from sheer necessity he joined himself to a citizen of the land to obtain work. And his employer sent him into his fields to feed swine — the most degrading manner of work that could be conceived in the mind of a Jew. Yet, famished for food, he would gladly have fed on the husks which the swine ate, and no man gave unto him.

The straits to which this young man was brought in the far country are a typical example of the degradation which a man can reach who has cast to the winds the restraints of Christian teachings, and no longer has any regard for holiness or righteousness, nor any reverence for God. He begins to reap in this present life what he has sown, but that is only a foretaste of what awaits him in eternity, if he persists in continuing that course. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7, 8).

He Came to Himself

This young man suffered. And it was good that he did. The Psalmist David said, "Before I was afflicted I went astray. . . . It is

good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psalm 119:67, 71). While sitting in the field among the swine, about to perish with hunger, this young man "came to himself." That short sentence has a depth of meaning — it means that his conscience was awakened. That "still small voice," which was silenced by his revellings in sin, now began to speak again. The conscience is a faculty planted in one's inmost being through which God speaks. And it can become so hardened, through years of sin and rebellion, that God's voice can no longer be heard. And that is a dangerous state for a man. to reach. But even at that stage, if there is a spark of honesty still in the heart, God is just merciful enough to send trouble or affliction — anything that will jolt one into a realization of his lost, undone condition, and his need of God.

Back to Father's House

Such was the awakening of the prodigal son. While he was meditating in the field, he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." Acting upon his resolve, he started back, footsore and in tattered clothing, over those hills which some years before he, no doubt, had traveled with a caravan of camels, headed for the "bright lights" of Egypt.

"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Can you conceive of the love of that father? Such is the love of the heavenly Father. While the sinner is yet a great way off, He will meet him more than half way, have compassion, and plant the kiss of pardon upon his forehead. He will not make a hired servant out of him. He will command the royal robe to be put upon him, the ring of authority to be put upon his finger, and the shoes of the Gospel of Peace upon his feet. He will have the fatted calf killed, saying, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again." And all Heaven will rejoice.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:1, 2).

QUESTIONS

- 1 In what respect are we all like sheep? Quote the Scripture.
- 2 Where is there rejoicing when a sinner is saved?
- 3 In what respect is a lost coin like a lost soul?
- 4 Since there was plenty at his father's house, what motive prompted the younger son to leave?
- 5 What far country was it to which he probably went? and what did that country typify?
- 6 Who did the son typify? Who did the father typify? And who did the elder brother typify?
- 7 What do you consider the crowning thought typified in the narrative of the prodigal son?
- 8 Who did the elder brother typify when he was angry and would not go in?
- 9 What occurrence in this 15th chapter of Luke prompted Jesus to use the elder brother as a type?