

Luke 15 - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son

Luke 15: Introduction

Three of the best known of Jesus' parables:

- The Lost Sheep,
- The Lost Coin,
- The Prodigal Son.

These parables arose out of definite situations.

- The sheep was lost through foolishness;
- The coin through carelessness;
- The son was lost because of willfulness.

These parables are not about lost things.

They are about the ones searching for them.

It was an offence to the scribes and Pharisees that Jesus associated with men and women who, by the orthodox, were labeled as sinners.

The Pharisees called them the People of the Land;

There was a complete barrier between the Pharisees and the People of the Land.

To marry a daughter to one of them was like exposing her bound and helpless to a lion.

The Pharisaic regulations laid it down,

"When a man is one of the People of the Land,

- entrust no money to him,
- take no testimony from him.
- trust him with no secret,
- do not appoint him guardian of an orphan,
- do not make him the custodian of charitable funds,
- do not accompany him on a journey."

A Pharisee was forbidden to be the guest of any such man or to have him as his guest.

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He was forbidden, so far as it was possible, to have any business dealings with him.

The deliberate Pharisaic aim was to avoid every contact with the people who did not observe the petty details of the law.

They were shocked to the core at the way in which Jesus companied with people who were not only rank outsiders, and 'people of the land' but who were clearly sinners.

Contact with them would necessarily defile him.

But Jesus found himself being accepted by the outcasts of society while being rejected by the religious leaders.

He was harshly criticized by the religious leaders for teaching that some who were considered to be hopeless and sinners could be and will be in the kingdom.

The strict among them said,

"There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who is obliterated before God."

They looked sadistically forward not to the saving but to the destruction of the sinner.

All teach that God is vitally concerned with the repentance of sinners.

Three words summarize this chapter:

- Lost,
- Found,
- Rejoice!

Luk 15:1-2

(1) Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.

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(2) Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

The opposition to Jesus was once again the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law.

Jesus spoke these parables to answer the accusations of the Pharisees and scribes who were scandalized at His behavior:

He not only welcomed these outcasts, He was *eating* with them.

They did not understand

the Son of Man had "come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10).

Even more, they were blind to the fact that *they themselves were among the lost!*

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The Lost Sheep

Luk 15:3-4

(3) So He told them this parable, saying,

(4) "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?"

The shepherd in Judaea had a hard and dangerous task.

It was all in the day's work to risk his life for his sheep.

Pasture was scarce.

The narrow central plateau was only a few miles wide, and then it plunged down to the wild cliffs and the terrible devastation of the desert.

There were no restraining walls or guard rails and sheep tend to wander.

Reading sign: These shepherds were experts at tracking and could follow the straying sheep's footprints for miles across the hills.

Isa 53:6 *All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.*

1Pe 2:25 *For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

A shepherd had to pay for sheep lost on his watch unless he could prove it was killed by a predator.

If a sheep was lost, the shepherd must at least bring home the fleece to prove how it had died.

Gen 31:38 *"These twenty years I [Jacob] have been with you [Laban]; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of*

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your flocks. 39 "That which was torn of beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself. You required it of my hand whether stolen by day or stolen by night.

Exo 22:10 *"If a man gives his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep for him, and it dies or is hurt or is driven away while no one is looking, 11 an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its owner shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution. 12 "But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. 13 "If it is all torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces.*

Luk 15:5-7

(5) *"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 which was lost!'*

(7) *"I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

Many (not all but many) of the flocks were communal flocks, belonging, not to individuals, but to villages.

There would be two or three shepherds in charge.

When a sheep wandered off, some of the shepherds would bring the rest of the flocks home on time and bring news that one shepherd was still out on the mountain side searching for the sheep which was lost.

Then the whole village would be up on the watch.

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When they saw the shepherd off in the distance striding home with the lost sheep across his shoulders, the whole community would shout with joy and thanksgiving.

These were poor people and a sheep lost was a set back; a great loss.

Jesus was not saying the other 99 sheep were not important.

Each was just as important as the lost sheep.

But, they were safe in the fold.

Jesus was emphasizing the urgency for finding and returning that the one sheep that was not in the fold.

The lost sheep represented the sinners with whom Jesus was eating (**vv. 1-2**).

The Pharisees *thought* themselves righteous and therefore in no need of a shepherd or of repentance.

Jesus will straighten this out in the 3rd parable with the elder son's attitude and reaction...

Mar_2:17 *And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." [the self righteous]*

Keep in mind:

Rom 3:10 *as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; 11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; 12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."*

So much for the 99 righteous persons who need no repentance - there are none.

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Jesus used this for comparison purposes not to make a statement regarding the righteous.

Jesus said that when a lost sinner is found God is as glad as a shepherd is when a strayed sheep is brought home.

Men may give up hope of a sinner;
not so God.

God loves the folk who never stray away;

However, in his heart there is the joy of joys when a lost one is found and comes home.

Closing note for the lost sheep:

A sheep who continually wandered off and got lost would eventually learn dependence on the shepherd.

the shepherd would break a leg of the sheep.

harsh but complete due to the sheep's actions...and for its own good

The shepherd would not abandon the sheep but would carry it everywhere they needed to go.

By the time the leg healed, the sheep knew it was better off at the shepherd's side than anywhere else it might have wandered.

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The Lost Coin

Luk 15:8

(8) "Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?"

The same message as the first but it emphasizes the thoroughness of the search.

It would be easy to lose a coin in a peasant's house

It might take a long search to find it.

- The houses were very dark

Typically lit by one little circular window about 18" across

A lamp would be lit to brighten it a bit further often even in the day time.

- The floor was beaten earth covered with dried reeds and rushes;

Looking for a coin on a floor like that was literally looking for a needle in a haystack.

The woman swept the floor hoping that she might see the coin glint or hear it tinkle as it moved.

She continued to sweep the house again and again searching carefully until she found the coin.

Two reasons why the woman may have been so diligent:

1] A drachma was a silver Greek coin (<G1406>).

- It is referred to only here in the New Testament,
- It equaled about a day's wages.

These people lived day to day.

Very little stood between them and real hunger.

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The woman may well have searched with this intensity because, if she did not find the coin the family would not eat.

2] The mark of a married woman was a head-dress made of ten silver coins linked together by a silver chain.

A peasant girl would scrape and save for years to amass her ten coins.

The head-dress was almost the equivalent of her wedding ring.

When she had it, it was so inalienably hers that it could not even be taken from her for debt.

It may be that it was one of these coins that the woman had lost, so she searched for it as any woman would search if she lost her marriage ring.

Whatever the case, it is easy to think of the joy of the woman when at last she saw the glint of the elusive coin and when she held it in her hand again.

Luk 15:9-10

(9) "When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!'"

(10) "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Jesus said that this is like the joy God expresses in the presence of all the angels when one sinner comes home,

- the joy of a home when a coin which has stood between them and starvation has been lost and is found;
- the joy of a woman who loses her most precious possession, with a value far beyond money, and then finds it again.

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Jesus shocked His audience:

God actually searches for lost sinners!

No Pharisee had ever dreamed of a God like that.

A great Jewish scholar has admitted that this is the one absolutely new thing which Jesus taught men about God -- that he actually searched for men.

The pious religious folk of Jesus day might have agreed that if a man came crawling home to God in self-abasement and prayed - no begged - for mercy and pity he might find it;

But the pious religious folk of Jesus day would never have conceived of a God who went out to search for sinners.

No wonder the Pharisees and scribes were offended: there was no place in a legalistic theology for a God like that.

They had forgotten that God had sought out Adam and Eve when they had sinned and attempted to hide from God.

Gen 3:8 *They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"*

God was like a father who pitied His wayward children.

Psa 103:8 *The LORD is compassionate and gracious, Slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness. 9 He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. 10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His loving kindness toward those who fear Him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our*

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transgressions from us. 13 Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. 14 For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.

The point would have been clear to Jesus' listeners:

The sinners with whom He was associating were extremely valuable to God. (Cf. similar wording in **vv.6, 9.**)

We believe in 'the seeking love of God' because we see that love incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

And we so often take it for granted assuming it is our right to expect it...

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The Prodigal Son - more likely "The Parable of the Loving Father";

It is far more about our Father than the we wayward sons...

Luke 15:11

(11) And he said, A man had two sons:

Prodigal son(s): Both erred, both "did it their way".

The contrast between his sons is one of the key points of the parable.

Luk 15:12

(12) "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.

Normally an estate was not divided and given to the heirs until the father could no longer manage it well.

Under Jewish law a father was not free to leave his property as he liked.

Having 2 sons, the elder son must receive 2/3 and the younger 1/3.

Deu 21:17 *"But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn.*

This law protecting the first-born son by an 'unloved' wife became the 'rule of tradition' for all first born sons.

It was common for a father to distribute his estate before he died, if he wished to retire, but this was not the case.

The youngest son requested an unusual thing when he asked his father to give him his share of the estate.

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The father acquiesced to his son's demand and gave him his share of the inheritance.

The father did not argue.

He knew that if the son was ever to learn he must learn the hard way; and he granted his request.

As you have spoken --> **Num 14:2** vs **14:28-32**

Luk 15:13

(13) "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living."

The son collected his share of the property and soon left home.

The younger son took that wealth, went far away, and squandered it in wild living.

The older son remained with the father at home and did not engage in such practices.

Note that it was his older brother's presumption that he wasted it with prostitutes (**v.30**).

Probably true but a speculated accusation in any case.

Thomas Huxley: "A man's worst difficulties begin when he is able to do as he likes."

... The errands your wife gives you on the weekends are for your own good ...

... Idle hands just may really be the devil's playground ...

We are always heading for trouble when we value...

- things more than people;
- pleasure more than duty;
- distant scenes more than the blessings of home;

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- coveting what see others have rather than being thankful for what we have.

The hearers immediately would have begun to understand the point of the story.

Jesus had been criticized for associating with sinners.

The sinners were considered people who were far away from God, squandering their lives in riotous living.

Luk 15:14-15

(14) "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished."

(15) "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine."

He soon ran through the money and out of friends...

A famine occurred and the second son ran out of money so that he had to work for a foreigner feeding pigs, something absolutely detestable to a Jew.

Perhaps the far country was east of the Sea of Galilee where Gentiles tended pigs (**8:26-37**).

In his hunger he longed for the pods—the food he fed the pigs.

The pods were probably carob pods, from tall evergreen carob trees.

As a Jew, he could not have stooped any lower.

The law said, "Cursed is he who feeds swine."

He was forced to do for a stranger what he would not do for his father and what his father would never ask him to do.

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Luk 15:16-17

(16) "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

(17) "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!

Then Jesus paid sinning mankind the greatest compliment it has ever been paid.

In this low condition, Jesus said, he came to his senses.

He decided to go back to his father and work for him.

Surely he would be better off to work for his father than for a foreigner.

He wrote his apology speech and headed home.

Luk 15:18

(18) 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

Had he stopped there he would only have experienced regret and remorse;

true repentance involves *action* and commitment:

- Changing your mind is not enough.
- No longer doing what you've been doing is not enough.
- You must " arise... and go..." a different way -

Return, confess your sinning, and follow the Lord...

Our resolutions may be noble, but we must *act* upon them.

- An attitude of praise that is never expressed is just an attitude.

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- An unspoken prayer request is not asked for...
- Remorse without changing my actions is self pity.

Take note what drove him back to his father:

his hunger and his recognition of how well off even his father's servants were in life.

Trouble is often the tool used to wake us up...

Luk 15:19

(19) I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."

He fully expected to be hired by his father as a servant, not to be taken back as his son.

His speech of regret fully formed in his mind, he left for home ... back to his father ...

The son had decided to come home and plead to be taken back not as a son but in the lowest rank of slaves, the hired servants, the men who were only day laborers.

An ordinary slave was in some sense a member of the household,

The hired servant could be dismissed during or at the end of any day's work.

He was not one of the family at all.

Luk 15:20

(20) "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

The father had been waiting for his son to return ...

he was scanning the horizon looking for the son...

The father recognized him afar off,

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even in his poor, beat down condition and *ran to meet him*,

He threw his arms around the boy and embracing him he kissed him.

The son had brought disgrace to his family and village and should have been stoned to death.

Deu 21:18 *"If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, 19 then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. 20 "They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 "Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear.*

Harsh but the law...

Rom 6:23 The wages of sin is death.

Ezek 18: "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.

Rev 3:19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Luk 15:21-22

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(21) *"And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

(22) *"But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;*

The son arrived home;

According to the best Greek texts, his father never gave him the chance to ask to be a servant.

He broke in before that.

The father would not even listen to all of the young son's rehearsed speech.

Instead the father turned and restored the son

He ordered his servants to provide him with new garments reflective of his position in his Father's house

with a robe, a ring – emblem of *sonship* – and sandals.

The robe stands for honour;

The ring for authority,

for if a man gave to another his signet ring it was the same as giving him the power of attorney;

The shoes for a son as opposed to a slave, for children of the family were shod and slaves were not.

The slave's dream in the negro spiritual is of the time when "all God's chillun got shoes," for shoes were the sign of freedom.

Gen 41:41 *Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh*

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took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck.

Isa 61:10 *I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

2Co 5:21 *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Servants did not wear rings or expensive garments.

Psa 103:10 *He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. 12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. 13 Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. 14 For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.*

Luk 15:23

(23) and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

The father ordered his servants prepare a banquet for all to celebrate his the son's return.

Jesus intentionally used the banquet motif again.

He had previously spoken of banquets to symbolize the coming kingdom of God.

Luk 13:23-30

(23) And someone said to Him, "Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?" And He said to them,

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- (24) "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.*
- (25) "Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.'*
- (26) "Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets!'*
- (27) and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME, ALL YOU EVILDOERS.'*
- (28) "In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being thrown out.*
- (29) "And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.*
- (30) "And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last*

Luk 14:15-24

- (15) When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"*
- (16) But He said to him, "A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many; (17) and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, 'Come; for everything is ready now.'*
- (18) "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'*

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- (19) *"Another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.'*
- (20) *"Another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.'*
- (21) *"And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'*
- (22) *"And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'*
- (23) *"And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.'*
- (24) *'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.'"*

Jesus' hearers would have easily realized the significance of this feast.

Sinners (whom the young son symbolized) were entering into the kingdom because they were coming to God.

They believed they needed to return to Him and be forgiven by Him.

**Despite his failures,
the son never lost his sonship!
He never lost his father's love and welcome
home.**

The father did not ask him to "earn" his forgiveness.

No amount of good works can save us from our sins or rectify our evil deeds.

Titus 3:3-7

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- 3:** *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.*
- 4:** *But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5: Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6: Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; 7: That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Eph 2:8-10

- 8** *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.*

Neither did the Father punish his returning son.

He simply welcomed him home with joy and celebration.

Luk 15:24

(24) for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

Interesting description: dead, and now alive again.

John 14:6

- He was lost (**v.24**).; ("I am the way")
- He was ignorant (**v.17**) ("I am the truth")
- He was dead (**v.24**). ("I am the life")

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These three parables are not simply three ways of stating the same thing.

There is a difference.

- The sheep went lost through sheer foolishness.
It did not think; and many a man would escape sin if he thought in time.
- The coin was lost through no fault of its own.
Many a man is led astray; and God will not hold him guiltless who has taught another to sin.
- The son deliberately went lost, callously turning his back on his father.

The love of God can defeat the foolishness of man, the seduction of the tempting voices, and even the deliberate rebellion of the heart.

The love of God is far broader than the love of man;
God can forgive when men refuse to forgive.

In face of a love like that we cannot be other than lost in wonder, love and praise.

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The other prodigal son - the 'good' boy

1Co 10:12 *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall.*

Luk 15:25-28

(25) *"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.*

(26) *"And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be.*

(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 became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.*

The older brother, coming home from working in the field and hearing what was happening, got angry.

Similarly the Pharisees and teachers of the Law were angry with the message Jesus was proclaiming.

They did not like the idea that people from outside their nation as well as outcasts and sinners in the nation were to be a part of the kingdom.

Jesus had previously warned the two disputing brothers

Lu 12:15 *"Take heed and beware of covetousness."*

Parable of the new bigger barns...

The covetous person can never be satisfied, no matter how much he accumulates; and

the dissatisfied heart leads to a disappointed life.

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Like the older son who refused to go to the feast, the Pharisees refused to enter the kingdom Jesus offered to the nation.

The loving father who ran to meet the prodigal son also came out of the house of feasting to plead with the older son!

Jesus ate with Pharisees as well as sinners.

He did not desire to exclude the Pharisees and teachers of the Law from the kingdom.

His message was an invitation to everyone.

Luk 15:29

(29) "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

Those words betrayed the fact that the older brother thought he had a relationship with his father because of his works.

He served his father, not out of love but out of a desire for reward.

He even thought of himself as being in bondage to his father.

The Pharisees had a religion of good works.

By their fasting, studying, praying, and giving, they had hoped to *earn* blessings from God and *merit* eternal life.

They knew nothing of the grace of God.

Works can lead to pride and self-righteousness...

His unconcern for his missing brother, and his resentment that he had come home is disturbing and a fatal indictment to the Pharisees and scribes

- then and now.

Luke 15 - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son

Luk 15:30

(30) but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

His attitude is one of utter lack of sympathy.

He refers to the prodigal, not as any brother, but as your son.

He was the kind of self-righteous character who would cheerfully have kicked a man into the gutter rather than set him on his feet, clean him up and rejoice he has been restored.

Jesus had taught that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love others.

The elder son broke both of these:

- he did not love God (typified here by the father) and
- he did not love his lost wandering younger brother.

His plans and dreams were shattered because of his brother's return.

One of the most insidious traps are our own *expectations*.

How important it is to leave them at the Throne...

Luk 15:31

(31) "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.'

The father pointed out that the older son had had the joy of being in the house all the time, and now he should rejoice with the father in his brother's return.

The words, "You are always with me and everything I have is yours," suggest the religious leaders' privileged position as members of God's Chosen People.

Luke 15 - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son

They were the recipients and guardians of the covenants and the Law.

Rom 3:1 *Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?*

Rom 9:3 *For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, (4) who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, (5) whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.*

Rather than feeling angry, they should rejoice that others were joining them and would be a part of the kingdom.

Luk 15:32

(32) 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'

One cannot lose something he does not own,

A son is already a son

Interestingly, while the father had the last word, we do not know how the story ended.

(See **Jonah 4** for a parallel narrative.)

We do know that the Pharisees continued to oppose Jesus and distance themselves from His followers;

their leaders eventually brought about the Lord's death.

In spite of the Father's pleading, they would not come in.

Luke 15 - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son

Everybody in this chapter experienced joy except the older brother.

There are two aspects to salvation:

- **God's part:**

the shepherd seeks the lost sheep;
the woman searches for the coin.

- **Man's part:**

the wayward son willingly repented and went home.

Both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man must be considered (**John 6:37; 2 Thes 2:13-14**).

Joh 6:37 *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

2Th 2:13 *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Luke 15 - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son

Epilogue: An Aged Prodigal

It is tragic to see a young person gather together his all and take his journey into a far country only to waste his substance on loose living.

Our grief may be softened by the hope that he is not playing for keeps. Some day he may recover his sanity and return to his waiting father.

When an older person heads toward the pigpen, the odds are that he will soon reach the point of no return.

This ugly turning away from God is likely to be final.

Solomon failed at his hour of greatest need and the hour of his greatest opportunity.

He inherited great position.

He was not only the choice of David, but the choice of God as well.

He also had the ability to fill that lofty position.

A lofty position does not always guarantee great abilities.

"Pygmies will be pygmies even though perched on the Alps."

"A thief steals because he is a thief. He does not become a thief because he stole.

You do what you are...you need to be born again - Transformed, renewed daily,

- o reckoning yourself "dead" - take up your cross daily
- o reckoning yourself alive to and in Christ...

Solomon was enriched by having a consecrated father.

David was a dedicated man, in spite of some shady yesterdays.

Luke 15 - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son

He had greatly sinned, he had greatly repented, and had been greatly forgiven.

Solomon also had had a personal experience of God Himself.

Two appearances were mentioned; certainly there may have been others.

He was an able ruler, a magnificent monarch, and a shrewd and successful merchant as well.

He was a man of peace;

He did not squander his wealth in fruitless wars. He was a great builder.

But he was foolishly fond of display.

And he garnered a pampered court and lived extravagantly.

And accumulated of wives: 700, plus 300 concubines!

It seems people in the heights assume the rules aren't for them.

Promising executives get "CEO fever"

– a megalomaniacal transformation that takes place when finally landing the top job.

Solomon had become so powerful that he felt himself above the moral law.

He went his gaudy and godless way, feeling himself an exception because of his great gifts and seeming success.

His self-indulgent blindness wrecked his son and his kingdom.

Finishing well is the *real* challenge.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7).

Luke 15 - the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son

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[*The Aged Prodigal* by Pastor Brian Hughes, Calvary Chapel Auckland, New Zealand.]

Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT)

Missler's Bible Commentary - Luke