

Luke 15:1 ¶ Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.

Luke 15:2 And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

This chapter begins with Jesus surrounded by all the publicans (tax collectors) and sinners, social outcasts, who want to hear what He has to say. Jesus is evidently sharing a meal with them as He talks to them. This offends the Pharisees and scribes, so they begin complaining about His actions once again.

Luke 15:3 And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

Luke 15:4 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?

Luke 15:5 And when he hath found *it*, he layeth *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing.

Luke 15:6 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.

Luke 15:7 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.

Jesus again addresses the situation by teaching a parable. This parable tells the story of a shepherd who owns 100 sheep, and one of them gets lost. He immediately sets out to find the lost sheep and carries it back to the flock. The fact that he carries it home indicates that the sheep is injured and unable to get back to the flock on its own. When the shepherd gets home, he calls all his friends and neighbors to join him in celebrating the fact that he found the lost sheep.

Now the spiritual application—There is great joy in heaven over one sinner that recognizes he is lost and repents of his sin. There is no cause for celebration for the 99 that don't recognize they are sinners in need of repentance.

Jesus is like the shepherd. He is traveling throughout Israel seeking lost sheep to return to God in repentance and faith. We are just like the sheep. We are helpless to save ourselves and are dependent on Jesus for our salvation.

Luke 15:8 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*?

Luke 15:9 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.

Luke 15:10 Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Jesus then tells the story of a woman who has ten pieces of silver, but loses one. One commentary states that each piece of silver represented a day's wages;

another states that it could be part of a treasured piece of jewelry that identifies her as married. She immediately lights a candle, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it. When she finds it, she also calls her friends and neighbors to celebrate with her for finding the lost piece of silver.

The spiritual application is the same. There is great joy in heaven over one sinner, one lost person that repents. If God rejoices over the salvation of one sinner, shouldn't those who claim to love Him do the same?

God created a perfect world and then created man to care for it and enjoy it in fellowship with Him. When man chose to reject God and sin, he became lost; God could no longer fellowship with him. When man chooses to repent and turn back to God, he is found once again; he is restored to fellowship with God. Though God desires a restored relationship with man, He will not force it; but He joyfully accepts each and every person who recognizes his/her need and is willing to repent. Notice that implied is the truth that God is actively working to restore the lost to His fold because He values every individual.

Luke 15:11 ¶ And he said, A certain man had two sons:

Luke 15:12 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.

Luke 15:13 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.

Luke 15:14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

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

Luke 15:16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

Luke 15:17 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!

Luke 15:18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

Luke 15:19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

Now we come to one of the most well known teachings of Jesus—that of the prodigal son. This story is about a man with two sons. The younger son decides that he wants to take his portion of the inheritance and set out on his own. The father complies and gives him his portion. A few days later he gathers up all his stuff and sets out for a far country.

It wasn't long before he squandered all he had on a life of lavish indulgence. Not only did he lose everything, but the land was hit with a great famine. He tried to fend for himself by taking a job feeding pigs. (This would indicate that he was in another country, since the Jews did not raise pigs; they were unclean.) The pigs were better off than he was; they were being fed, and he was hungry. It seems no one took pity on him.

Finally, he realized that his father's servants had more than enough to eat while he was starving to death. He decided to swallow his pride and go home to his father, ask his forgiveness and ask for a job as a servant.

Notice that he didn't plan to make excuses for himself or blame someone else for what had happened to him. He planned to admit ownership of his situation.

Luke 15:20 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.

Luke 15:21 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.

Luke 15:22 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:

Luke 15:23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry:

Luke 15:24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

It seems his father never lost hope that his son would come back home, because he spotted him approaching while he was still a long way off; he had been looking out for him with hope and expectation. His heart yearned for his son, so he took off running to meet him with hugs and kisses. The son asked his father for forgiveness and admitted that he was no longer worthy to be called his son. The father responded by sending his servants to bring his best robe to cover him and putting a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet—all acknowledging him as a son. He sent them to kill the fatted calf and prepare a meal to celebrate the return of his son. Though he had been as dead and lost once he left home, he was now alive and found—a reason to rejoice and be merry.

I liked this observation by David Guzik: "We must come to God willing to be total slaves, but by His love, He makes us total sons."

Luke 15:25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

Luke 15:26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

Luke 15:27 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.

Luke 15:28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

Luke 15:29 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:

Luke 15:30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

Luke 15:31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

Luke 15:32 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.

The older son had been out working in the field; and as he got close to home, he heard music and dancing. So, he asked one of the servants what was going on. The servant related that his younger brother was back home again safe and sound, and his father had killed the fatted calf and called for a celebration.

Instead of rejoicing, the older son became angry and refused to go in; so the father came out to urge him to join them. The older son was jealous. He complained that he had obediently and faithfully served his father for many years, but his father had never offered him even a young goat to party with his friends. As soon as his younger brother who had squandered his money on harlots came back home, however, he killed the fatted calf to celebrate.

The father explained that everything he possessed would belong to the older son, but it was important to understand that his brother had recognized the folly of his ways and had returned a repentant and changed young man. That was cause for great rejoicing.

The application—The father represents God and the love He has for us. We have rebelled against God in sin, but He eagerly anticipates the time when we will recognize our sin and turn back to him in repentance and faith to save us.

In context, the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees was comparable to that of the elder son; they didn't think that Jesus should show any regard for "sinners."

I think there is another truth illustrated in this teaching. We often don't appreciate what we have until we lose it.

(7/27/14) Pastor Doug Sauder added more insight for me. He pointed out that Jesus left us hanging at the end of the story. The truth is that the big brother (who represented the Pharisees) needed to repent of his sin of pride and seek restoration with his father (and his brother) as well. He looked for all intents and purposes as though he was a loving and obedient son, while in truth he was only serving with selfish motives—receiving his inheritance and maintaining his reputation. He had no concern for his brother nor was he happy that his father rejoiced in the return of his prodigal son. The opportunity for self-examination is obvious.