

The Loving Father

Scripture Reading: *Luke 15:1-10*

Introduction:

1. When one reads the parable of *"the Lost Sheep"* one usually thinks about the one sheep that got lost and was later found. Why? Because it has been labeled "the Lost Sheep."
2. When one reads the parable of *"the Lost Coin"* one usually thinks about the coin that was lost and then found. Why? Because it has been labeled "the Lost Coin."
3. When one reads the parable of *"the Prodigal Son"* one usually thinks of the wayward son and his repentance. Why? Because it has been labeled "the Prodigal Son."
 - A. As a result we more often than not put the emphasis on the Sheep, Coin, and Son. While they are all important and needed, I believe the heart of these parables teach us more about our loving Father.
4. In Luke 15:1-2, the tax collectors and sinners wanted to be near Jesus, to hear His words of refreshment and concern for them. Yet the Pharisees and scribes complained saying, *"this Man receives sinners and eats with them."*
 - A. The scribes and Pharisees would not associate themselves with tax collectors and sinners in any way. They hated and despised them. Therefore, they couldn't accept Jesus not only receiving them, but stooping so low as to eat with them!
 - 1) As a result of their hardness of heart, Jesus proceeded to explain the importance of every man's soul by telling three parables about the Father's Love.

The Prodigal Son

1. In order to gain a proper appreciation of the Father's love for us, let's read and analyze the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Luke 15:11-32

- A. We learn from this parable many things concerning the young son who left his father and later returned.

HIS ERROR:

- 1) Self-will (v12): Concerned only with "self." (Considered no plan nor consequences)
- 2) Selfishness (v13): Spent his inheritance on himself, only thinking of himself.
- 3) Separation (v13): He traveled to a "far country," separated from those who loved and cared for him.
- 4) Wayward Living (v13): He "wasted" all he had on riotous, wayward living.
- 5) Spiritual Destitution (v14): He had squandered his inheritance and now was destitute - he was hungry!
- 6) Starvation (v16): He was ready to fill his stomach with the bean with which the swine ate.

HIS RETURN:

- 1) Realization (v17): He realized how much better off his father's servants are ("bread enough to spare").
- 2) Resolution (v18): He is resolved, no longer to linger, but to return to his father.
- 3) Repentance (v19): He wants to return home and is willing to become a hired servant to do so.
- 4) Return (v20): He heads back toward his father.
 - a. Repentance is a change of mind, resulting in a change of action (verses 19-20).

The Loving Father

1. As the "young son" has learned a valuable lesson in life and turns to head back toward his father, we now shift our focus on the actions of the father:
 - A. A reconciliation takes place (v20): His father, upon recognizing his son's return **RUNS** and smothers him with embraces and kisses.
 - B. Upon hearing the confession of his beloved son (v21-22), the father re-cloths him with only the best he has.
 - C. A great rejoicing takes place (v23-24): A celebration takes place immediately with a fatted calf because "*my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.*"
2. The loving father was filled with great joy upon the return of his wayward son.
 - A. We learn that no matter how bad our life may have been or may be today, our loving Father will embrace us when we are repentant and return to Him.

The Elder Son

1. But wait! There is yet one more part to the parable. The young son is jealously rejected by his brother (25-32).
 - A. He refuses to join in the celebration.
 - B. His father pleads with him to come in and join in rejoicing for the young son's return!
 - C. But the elder son complains:
 - 1) I have served you these many years.
 - 2) I never transgressed your commandment at any time.
 - 3) You have never provided such a celebration for me!
 - 4) But as soon as "this son of yours" came who devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.
 - a. In other words - your son left, was sinful, and yet you still welcomed him back!
 - D. The loving father replies (31-32):
 - 1) *"Son you are always with me, and all that I have is yours." "Your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."*

Conclusion

1. Now, let's go back to the beginning for a moment: Jesus told the three parables because of the Pharisees' and Scribes' statement, "*This Man receives sinners and eats with them.*"
2. It took this third parable, the parable of the "prodigal son" to show the true devotion of the loving Father and the true colors of the Scribes and Pharisees.
 - A. In the rebuke the two first parables had shown the Pharisee party and the rulers of Israel how they ought to have acted.
 - B. **This parable showed them how they DID act!**
3. The story of "the Loving Father" in this parable shows so clearly the great and awesome love our Father has for each one of us.

Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

4. Our heavenly Father loves His children.
 - A. Even when they turn away from Him, His heart continues to yearn for them in love.
 - B. But especially when they return with a penitent attitude!
 - 1) There is "*joy in heaven*" (Luk 15:7).
 - 2) There is "*joy in the presence of the angels of God*" (Luk 15:10).

