

## Sunday Lesson – March 7, 2021

GOSPEL: Luke 15: 1-32

### ***Lost Sheep, Coin, Son*** **Background**



“Virtually everything that is done in Jewish culture brings either shame or honor. The primary motivation for what and how things are done is based on seeking honor for oneself and avoiding shame. This was the central and all-consuming preoccupation of all Jewish interaction. The Pharisees saw themselves as being the beloved of God and the “sinners” as refuse.” *(Excerpts from gotquestions.org/parable-lost-sheep-coin.html)*

#### **Insight**

“We can see Luke 15 as one parable in three scenes. Each scene illustrates a different aspect of God's work. The Son seeks the lost as the Good Shepherd, the Holy Spirit seeks the lost with searching illumination, and the Father seeks the lost with open arms upon return. Each scene illustrates an increasing severity of loss. Of the sheep 1% were lost, of the coins 10% were lost, and of the sons 50% were lost. Each scene illustrates a different way of being lost.” *(Excerpts from blueletterbible.org/Luke 15 Study Guide by David Guzik)*

#### **Gospel Reading**

*The Story of the Lost Sheep:* “By this time a lot of men and women of questionable reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, “He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends.” Their grumbling triggered this story. “Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends

and neighbors, saying, ‘Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!’ Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.

*The Story of the Lost Coin:* “Or imagine a woman who has ten coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and scour the house, looking in every nook and cranny until she finds it? And when she finds it you can be sure she'll call her friends and neighbors: ‘Celebrate with me! I found my lost coin!’ Count on it—that's the kind of party God's angels throw every time one lost soul turns to God.”

*The Story of the Lost Son:* Then he said, “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, I want right now what's coming to me.’ “So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to feel it. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corn-cobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any. “That brought him to his senses. He said, ‘All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.’ He got right up and went home to his father. “When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: ‘Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.’ “But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, ‘Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his

feet. Then get a prize-winning heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found! And they began to have a wonderful time. “All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, ‘Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.’ “The older brother stomped off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, ‘Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!’ “His father said, ‘Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!’” The Message

### **What It Could Mean?**

“The three parables share a common structure: (a) something or someone considered valuable is characterized as out of place or lost, (b) it or he is found, brought, or returns home, (c) the owner, friends, family, and neighbors celebrate that what was lost is found. A relationship is restored.

In the first parable, the one lost sheep drifted from the fold and thus is in greater danger. Home should be a safe place for those that stray and those that stay. When the shepherd finds the one lost sheep, he calls his friends (*philo*) and neighbors—his community—together to celebrate (verse 6). Community is a place where we can lose and recover, without judgment.

In the second parable, that one drachma equals a day of hard labor. When she finds it, she summons her sister friends (*philas*) and neighbors to celebrate with her (verse 9). The money is what she needs to remain sheltered or feed her household. She and her family will suffer if the coin remains lost.

The third parable, we do not have to leave or stray, physically, from church, home, or community to be lost. The younger son appears to care more about living life on his terms than about the well being and feelings of his father and older brother. Sometimes we can only find ourselves in uncomfortable spaces, away from home. Unlike the owners of the lost sheep and lost coin, the father does not search for his son; he finds his own way home when all is lost: money, dignity, and shelter. He can go home or stay in the mire. Home is a place for the lost and the found, the “lost” who stay and the “lost” who leave.” (*Excerpts from workingpreacher.org by Mitzi J. Smith*)

### **Readings for Further Study**

- [Isaiah 6:9/Psalm 78:2/Matthew 13:35](#) *Pharisees be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing but not perceiving/Hearing God*
- [Romans 5:6/Isaiah 62:5/Zephaniah 3:17](#) *Christ died for the ungodly; God rejoices over you*

### **Thought for the Day**

“Define yourself radically as one beloved by God. This is the true self. Every other identity is illusion.” ~ *Brennan Manning, Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging*

### **A Prayer**

Rejoicing Father, you celebrate when one of your lost children is found because no one is worthless to you. We stand humbled and in awe that you would count us among your most prized possessions. Give us eyes to see the priceless value of every living soul, for the sake of the one who became human for the sake of our souls, Jesus Christ our seeker. **Amen.**