

Lost & Found (Luke 15)

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, April 6, 2025

COMMUNION

Today we will observe Communion. All who profess Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord are welcome to participate. The wafer you hold is representative of the Body of Christ, broken for us. The juice, of the shed Blood of Jesus. We do well to ready ourselves to receive. Please consider the following as you open your Communion packets.

QUOTE – “Nowhere is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ; and nowhere is Christ so familiarly [intimately] represented to us, as in this holy sacrament.” –Richard Baxter (English Theologian c. 1615–1691).

1 Corinthians 11:23–26 (NIV)

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

GUATEMALA

KEY (SLIDE) – We are collecting travel-sized toothpaste, hard candies and non-gummy vitamins for Guatemala.

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome. Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – Those familiar with my ministry know that I tend to teach in multi-segment series (i.e., 4–6 weeks). However, with Holy Week upon us—starting with Palm Sunday next week—I want to offer a standalone sermon. Turn to Luke 15. We will spend the whole of our time in this chapter—a chapter which has spoken to me of late.

NOTE 2 – The longer I am a student of Scripture the more I am moved by the depths contained within its pages. Even seemingly straightforward accounts contain layers of nuance, meaning and application, as we shall see. Luke 15 is among the best examples of what I mean by such sentiments! Are you ready to delve in this morning?

NOTE 3 – In the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke Christ Jesus shares three of His most beloved parables. A parable is a short, simple story that is meant to illustrate deep spiritual truth(s). In the ancient Jewish culture, things were explained not in terms of statistics or definitions, as they are in modern English-speaking cultures. Rather, the ancients explained things in terms of word pictures, and Christ utilized this method of teaching often.

Q. What three parables appear in Luke chapter 15?

A. The Parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son.

NOTE 4 – These three parables, as we must address, are deeply interconnected by both context and theme. We do well to understand that these parables were not offered in and are not to be understood in a vacuum. Rather, they were born of and must be considered in light of their broader context. Of what context do I speak?

CRITICAL CONTEXT

Luke 15:1–2 (NIV)

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

NOTE 1 – Consider that Luke 15 recounts or records a scene from the apex of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus is surrounded by masses—masses of sinful men and women, and tax collectors—who desire to hear Him. We might look upon this as a wonderful thing, and rightly so, but Luke recounts that not everyone was pleased. No, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law—the voices of religion and the elite of the day—were displeased.

Q. Why? Why were they displeased to the point of *muttering*?

A. They did not *mutter* because He taught sinners. They taught as well (and classified everyone but themselves as sinners). No, Luke 15:2 makes it clear that these figures muttered because He welcomed and ate with sinners. To show welcome and to break bread with another was a sign of affection and friendship, and expressed a desire for meaningful connection. In their estimation, this was inappropriate for a holy rabbi and teacher of religion. “How could a man so clearly used by God in teaching and working the miraculous associate with such sinners?”

FYI – There has always been a divide between those who deem themselves religious and those they deem sinful.

NOTE 2 – The religious elite might also have seen Jesus’ association with the sinful as tacit approval of their sin. “Might it be that since Jesus associates with such notoriously wicked people He condones of their wickedness?” After all, why would someone who is holy want to associate with sinners unless He had no issue with their sin!

NOTE 3 – It is in this context and against such attitudes of the heart that He shares the following three parables: the Parable of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Lost (Prodigal) Son. All that follows was meant to expose their faulty perspective and check their hearts through the revelation of His heart, will and greater purpose. Keep such things in mind as we begin to read, breakdown and consider the three parables of Christ. Let us begin!

THE LOST SHEEP

Q. What is the first of the three parables?

A. Luke 15:3–7 posits the Parable of the Lost Sheep.

Q. Would you allow me to open with the following passage?

Luke 15:3–4 (Emphasis Mine)

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 “Suppose **one of you** has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?”

NOTE 1 – Off the bat we see that this was meant to expose the hearts and failures of the religious rulers. Jesus indicts them straight away, for such men would be willing to pursue a lost sheep while showing no care whatsoever for lost people—lost people who were made in the image of God. Let us continue our exploration!

Luke 15:3–6

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’”

NOTE 2 – Let us take the time to break down this parable, understanding the core components of the story, etc.

Q. What is the condition of the sheep at the start of the parable?

A. The sheep was lost (in a position of separation, isolation and peril) (4a).

Q. What is the response of the shepherd who had lost said sheep?

A. The shepherd begins a tireless and “risky” search for his lost sheep (4b).

Q. Why? Why does he undertake such a laborious, perilous work?

A. He’s moved by a sense of care or concern, for the sheep has gen. value.

Q. What is the response of the shepherd upon finding his sheep?

A. He is celebratory and calls for others to rejoice with him in kind (5–6).

Q. What does this short and straightforward parable reveal? What spiritual truths was it meant to touch upon?

A. To begin, it speaks to the condition and the peril of the lost soul who is separated from their Good Shepherd. Also, it speaks to the response of our Good Shepherd, who searches for and ongoingly reaches out to the lost. Consider the work of Jesus and the peril He faced—the loss of His life—in seeking and saving that which was lost. Why? Why did Christ so pursue? Because He possesses as sense of real concern and care for His lost ones—lost ones who of infinite worth. Finally, the rescue and restoration of a lost soul to God is cause for celebration!

NOTE 3 – This point is affirmed in the postscript of the passage. Consider the following selection from Luke 15:7!

Luke 15:7

7 “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

NOTE 4 – Verse 7 introduces another critical reality by noting that “there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who **repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent” (Emphasis Mine). Ultimately, it appears that those who are “found” are those who “repent” (both experience the same outcome).

NOTE 5 – This was not something evident in the story—we see no image of repentance on the part of the sheep. This is sensible since the primary emphasis of the parable was on the heart and work of the shepherd v. sheep. Yet Jesus touches upon the appropriate response of His “sheep” in His postscript, citing the need for repentance. Herein we see a wondrous balance presented between the work of Christ and the proper response of the lost. As Christ searches out for you and reaches out to you, you must receive His work and repent accordingly. Such people—and only such people (i.e., the repentant) are found, and give cause for the heavens to celebrate!

NOTE 6 – These are precious, timeless truths. Moreover, this parable was rife with lessons for the religious elite:

Peril of the Lost (+)

Need of Repentance (+)

The Rl. Value of the Lost (–)

God’s Heart to Rescue Such (–)

Such Served as a Needed Check (–)

THE LOST COIN

KEY – However, Christ Jesus was not finished. Note that He did not offer simply one parable, but three in total!

Q. What is the next parable of the three?

A. Luke 15:8–10 posits the Parable of the Lost Coin.

Luke 15:8–10

8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins [lit. ten *drachmas*, each worth about one day’s wage] and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

NOTE 1 – Once again consider the exposing element herein (i.e., concerning the heart of the Jewish elders). How could it be that the woman in this story would undertake such a work to find a lost coin, yet they would do precious little—and, in fact, deemed it inappropriate—to seek a lost soul in need of restoration to God? Ouch!

NOTE 2 – Let us take the time to break down this parable, understanding the core components of the story, etc.

Q. What is the condition of the coin at the start of the parable?

A. The coin was lost—separated from the woman who held it dear (8a).

Q. What is the response of the woman who had lost this coin?

A. She began to tirelessly search for her coin until it was found (8b).

Q. Why? Why does she undertake such a painstaking work?

A. The coin held value, both financially and sentimentally.

NOTE 3 – How much was the silver coin worth from a purely monetary point of view? It was worth a day’s wage. No small sum of money, particularly in the ancient world. Moreover, the silver coin possessed sentimental value. The “ten silver coins” of verse 8 refers to a piece of jewelry with ten silver coins on it worn by brides. Therefore, this coin was connected with something that was the equivalent of a wedding ring in modern times. Precious!

Q. What is the response of the woman upon finding her coin?

A. She is celebratory and calls for others to rejoice with her in kind (9).

Q. What does this short and straightforward parable reveal? What spiritual truths was it meant to touch upon?

A. To begin, it speaks to the condition and the tragedy of a lost soul. Such a loss is deeply felt by the Lord! Moreover, it speaks to the work of Christ who tirelessly and painstakingly searches out for those who are lost. Why? Why does Christ so search? Because we possess genuine value to Him—a value transcending mere money. Finally, and once again, the finding and restoration of a lost soul to God is cause for genuine joy and celebration!

NOTE 4 – This point is affirmed in the postscript of the passage. Consider the following selection from Luke 15:10!

Luke 15:10

10 “In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

NOTE 5 – Consider once again the presence and place of repentance in this text. As has been noted beforehand, the circle of the “found” perfectly overlaps the circle of the “repentant” (i.e., both experience the same outcome).

NOTE 6 – This was not something evident in the story—we see no image of repentance on the part of the coin. This is sensible since the primary emphasis of the parable was on the heart and work of the woman v. the coin. Yet Jesus touches upon the appropriate response of His people in His postscript, citing the need for repentance. Herein we see a wondrous balance presented between the work of Christ and the proper response of the lost. As Christ searches out for us and reaches out to us, we must receive His work and repent accordingly. Such people—and only such people (i.e., the repentant) are found, and give cause for the heavens to celebrate!

NOTE 7 – These are precious, timeless truths. Moreover, this parable was rife with lessons for the religious elite:

Tragedy of Lost (+)

Need of Repentance (+)

The Rl. Value of the Lost (–)

God’s Heart to Rescue Such (–)

Such Served as a Needed Check (–)

THE LOST SON

KEY – However, Christ Jesus was not finished. Note that He did not offer simply one parable, but three in total!

Q. What is the third and final parable of the three?

A. Luke 15:11–32 records the Parable of the Lost Son.

NOTE 1 – This third and final parable is clearly the voluminous and most in-depth of the three offered herein. Of course, this parable does work to affirm much that has already been said. However, there are genuine areas of dissimilarity that serve to add particular emphases and complementary truths. We do well to begin with this:

Q. Do you recognize a sense of progression among the lost items?

A. Sheep→Coin→Son. There is a progression of real and personal value!

Q. Do you see how each parable will uniquely speak to varying audiences?

A1. The Parable of the Lost Sheep might exp. speak to poor men and young boys.

A2. The Parable of the Lost Coin might exp. speak to women and young maidens.

A3. The Parable of the Lost Son might exp. speak to those with a father-children.

NOTE 2 – Let us take the time to break down this parable, understanding the core components of the story, etc.

Luke 15:11–12

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.”

NOTE 3 – Already we see areas of similarity and difference herein. Much like the lost sheep and the lost coin, the prodigal son was truly lost (i.e., being in a condition of isolation and separation from his father; imperiled). Yet there is an area of distinction herein, concerning what precipitated and/or catalyzed this “lost” condition. What I mean is this: the lost sheep and coin might have been lost due to happenstance (i.e., hint of innocence). Christ is making it quite clear, however, that the prodigal son was lost due to personal sinfulness and treachery!

Q. Who in that original crowd would have felt sympathy for such a sinful and guilty wretch?

NOTE 4 – Moreover, we will see no hint of a search or seeking herein. The focus of this parable, at this juncture, is not the response of the father to his son, but the action and activities of the son while being in a lost condition. In fact, it is in this parable and at this point that we see the theme of repentance most clearly touched on. Note:

Luke 15:17–20a

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father.”

Q. What was the response of the father in this story?**Luke 15:20b–24**

20 . . . “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.”

NOTE 5 – Note the evident love and compassion of the father herein, demonstrated in a willingness to not only forgive his son, but to restore him to a place of sonship and more. Note again the theme of corporate joyfulness!

Q. What does this short and straightforward parable reveal? What spiritual truths was it meant to touch upon?

A. We all have acted treacherously of the Lord and squandered the precious gift(s) He desires for us in this life. Yet in the midst of our lostness, it is possible—by the Spirit—to come to our sense and reach a place of humility, manifesting in repentance. We can come home to the Father, who will receive and joyfully restore all who come! How many have experienced the blessing of being received by God, not as an enemy or servant, but as His own?

NOTE 6 – All of this touched upon so far in the Parable of the Lost Son should have spoken to the religious rulers.

Tragedy/Peril of the Lost (+)

The Need for ‘Real’ Repentance (+)

The Genuine Value of the Lost to God (–)

The Heart of God to Receive Such (–)

Much-Needed Pride Check (–)

NOTE 7 – Consider the cumulative impact these stories should have had on their hearts. Yet Christ was not done! Herein, we encounter another figure. This is a new turn of events in these three parables. Each story up until now has focused on pairs: **a)** shepherd and lost sheep; **b)** woman and lost coin; and seemingly **c)** father and son. Yet now Jesus adds a third primary character who is critical and particularly aimed at the religious and their kind:

Luke 15:25–32 (Emphasis Mine)

25 “Meanwhile, the **older son** was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Q. Who does this brother represent?

A. He represents an indictment against the Pharisees and teachers of the Law (and all of their kind thereafter). In so many ways the attitudes, actions and behaviors of this older brother represents those of the religious elite.

Q. What parallels exist between these figures?

- A1.** Proximity to the Father without Genuine Intimacy
- A2.** Diligent Yet Joyless Servitude (Emphasis on Works)
- A3.** Truly Scornful of the Father’s Heart v. Glorifying In It
- A4.** Possession of a Gross Sense of Moral Superiority
- A5.** Loveless and Merciless to Any Deemed Sinful

NOTE 8 – Herein Jesus associates the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law with a truly villainous character, showing that in many ways they also were in need of genuine repentance (i.e., even if it be of a different variety). Were these men really so different than the sinners they spurned, or was their evil merely cloaked in religiosity? After all, they too missed the nature, the glory, and the wonder of truly being an intimate “child” of Father God!

Q. What is the elder brother but a warning against all who follow such misguided steps?

SUMMATIONS

Q. What are you to do with these three parables?

A. I suppose your response depends on your condition...

Q. Are you self-righteous. Do you find yourself Pharisaic?

A. Repent and turn from prideful religion and seek the Lord!

Q. Are you lost? Are you much like the sheep, coin and son?

A. Repent and be found of the Lord. He seeks and will receive!

Q. Are you in right relationship with the Lord (found of Him)?

A. Serve your role in seeking the lost and join in the celebration!

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – I would call you to worship the Lord through your giving. Please give online and/or in person.

NOTE 2 – Check out the church website for upcoming events and more (www.NewLifeBarre.org).

NOTE 3 – WM on Tuesday, April 8, at 6:30pm; Men's Breakfast on Saturday, April 12, at 9am.

NOTE 4 – Holy Week Schedule: Palm Sunday (April 13); Good Friday (18); Easter (20).

NOTE 5 – Iron Sharpens Iron, Saturday, May 17. Time to finalize the roster.

2 Corinthians 13:14

14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.