

ONE PARABLE IN THREE PARTS

LUKE 15:1-24 • TV165B

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By

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Luke 15: 1-24

“Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 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? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 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. 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.

“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? 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. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

“And he said, A certain man had two sons: And he said, A certain man had two sons: 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. 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. And when

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he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 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! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 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. 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. 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: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."

If you would like to follow along in your Bible while I bring the message today, I invite you to turn to the **15th chapter of Luke**. I'm not going to read the first **24 verses**; that will serve as our context. I will be speaking from that portion of Scripture, **Luke 15: 1 through 24**.

I'm going to refer to these verses all the way through the message. So, if you would like to open your Bible to that portion of Scripture; I would like for you to read it for yourself after we leave the air. In other words, I want you to be like the noble Bereans; "*they searched the scriptures to see if these things be so.*"

I'm not asking you to receive a message because this is the way that I believe it or the way I preach it; I'm asking you for your own eternal welfare to "*search the scriptures whether these things be so*. Christ said, "*Search the Scriptures; they are they which testify of me.*"

The Lord tells us to "*study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

Here is what I am speaking on today; I am going to bring, I believe, a teaching message. We are going to look into the Word and study together a little bit. I believe that God has given me some light on this subject: "**ONE PARABLE IN THREE PARTS.**"

Now, to most people it is three parables in **Luke 15**. Most people believe this as three separate parables, but it is not three parables at all, it is one parable in three parts.

Now, you are familiar with the parables, most of you are:

First of all: The lost sheep

Our Lord said "*there was a man who had a hundred sheep and one of them was lost. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the fold and go out into the wilderness (out into the storm, or*

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wherever he has to go?)” He leaves everything, he leaves it all behind, and goes out personally and seeks his sheep and he seeks it until he finds it. When he finds his sheep he puts it on his shoulder and he brings it home.

When he comes back home with that lost sheep which he has found and delivered and brought back, he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, *“rejoice with me, this my sheep was lost and I found him.”*

Likewise, Christ said, *“there’s joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth.”* Now, that is one part of the parable, but that’s not the end of it.

He went on to say, *“And a certain woman had ten silver coins, if she loses one, she lights a candle and she sweeps the house and searches until she finds that one lost coin that she had lost in the dust.”*

When she finds it she calls her neighbors together and she says, *“Rejoice with me; I have found the coin that was lost.”* Likewise, Christ said, *“there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repented.”*

You see, the Lord is still carrying forth this story, this one story in three parts. But, that is not the end of it. He said, *“Likewise, there was a man who had two sons, an older son and a younger son. The younger son came to the father and said, father; divide the portion of your goods that belongs to me.”*

In other words, “I want my inheritance now. I don’t want to wait until you die, I want it right now.” So, his father gave him the inheritance (turned it over to him).

This young man went down into a foreign country and he wasted all of his money, all of his inheritance, he spent it all, he spent everything. He was so poor and so ragged and so destitute and poverty stricken that he wound up sitting on the railing of the pig-pen and would fain have eaten with the pigs, the husks that the pigs were eating.

While sitting there he said to himself, *“he came to himself”* the Scripture says, and he said, *“How many hired servants in my father’s house have bread to spare and here I am with nothing? I am going back home and I am going to say to my father, ‘father; I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and no longer worthy to be thy son; just make me one of your hired servants.’”*

But, when he was a great way off, the father saw him and the father ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him, he fell on his neck and kissed him. He said, *“Bring hither the best robe and shoes for his feet and a ring for his finger and kill the fatted calf for this my son was lost and now he is found.”*

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Do you see how there are three parts to this one parable? I am saying that this is not three parables; this is one parable in three parts. If you separate any of the parts and try to preach it and make it stand alone, you are going to miss the truth of this Scripture; you are certainly going to miss it because they need one another.

Someone said, “Each one of these stories is needful for the other. They are like three sides of a pyramid. There are writings on either side and they tell the whole story.” Let me tell you the story they tell the work of the Son, the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Father in redemption.

Now, I know that there is a lot of conflict and debate and discussion about the Trinity. I can’t explain the Trinity. I will not attempt to explain the Trinity. I will give you some scriptural references to the Trinity.

I know “*the Lord our God is one God;*” that is what the Scripture says. But, when God created man, He said; “*let us make man.*”

When our Lord Jesus Christ was baptized, the Scripture said, “*that the Son was baptized; the Father spake from heaven and said, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove.*”

When our Lord was glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Scripture says, “*that they saw Christ and the Father spake from heaven and said, this is my beloved Son; hear ye him.*”

Then, over in **1 John** it says, “*There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.*”

Then, our Lord sent His disciples forth and told them “*to go into all the world and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*”

Again, our Lord said to the disciples, “*I will pray the Father and he will give you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive.*”

So, what we have in this one parable of three parts is the glorious work of the Son, the Shepherd finding the sheep, the great work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating, enlightening sinners, and the Father in mercy and grace receiving all who return home.

Now, as in all of our Lord’s parables; this will help you a great deal in understanding parables, you can’t just lift a parable out and tell the story and make up a meaning. All of our Lord’s parables are understood according to the occasion for the parable. Do you get what I am saying, the occasion?

In other words, who is speaking, to who is he speaking, what is the subject? There are numbers of parables, 17 or 18 parables in the New Testament which our Lord gave.

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He said, *“I speak to the people in parables because they have eyes and they cannot see, ears; they cannot hear, and hearts; they cannot understand. So, I preach to them in parables.”*

A parable is a common, earthly, story that has a heavenly meaning. It is an ordinary story about ordinary people and ordinary events that help us to understand spiritual truth. To understand any parable you have to find out who is speaking, to whom he is speaking, and the subject about which he is speaking.

First of all: Now, in the particular case, in the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking. That is who gave the parable.

Secondly: To whom is he speaking?

He is addressing the Pharisees. Look at **Luke 15: verses 1 through 3**. He is addressing the Pharisees and the Scribes. Who are the Pharisees and the Scribes? They were religious people, deeply, devotedly and religious people.

These were the Scribes and Pharisees who did not believe that they were sinners. They did not believe that they needed mercy. They did not believe that they needed saving; they were religious people.

They prayed, they fasted, and they tithed. They went to the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and they were holy in their lives, moral in their conduct and deportment. They didn't need a Saviour; they didn't need mercy; they were good people.

The Pharisee stood in the temple and said, *“I'm not like other men. I'm not an adulterer; I'm not unjust, and I'm not an extortioner. I fast twice a week, (not just once), but twice a week. I tithe; I give alms of all I possess; I'm all these things; I really don't need any help.”* These are the people to whom the Lord is speaking.

Now, the occasion for the parable; will you listen?

In **verse 1** it says, *“Then drew near to him; (that is to Christ); then drew near unto him all the publicans and the sinners to hear him.”* And the religious leaders, the Pharisees and Scribes, murmured, complained, they found fault and they said, *“This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.”*

Now, do you see the occasion? Our Lord Jesus Christ was here in this town and sinners, publicans and sinners, noted sinners, well-known sinners, infamous sinners, wicked people, gathered around Him to hear Him.

These Pharisees stood on the outskirts of the crowd and they watched these sinners gather around the Master and they murmured among themselves. They said, *“This man receives sinners. This man even eats with sinners. (He socializes with sinners; sinners gather around him).”*

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That's the occasion for the parable. To me it is not surprising that sinners crowded about Christ. *"He came to seek and to save the lost."* Paul said, *"He came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief."*

He offered them some hope. He offered them help. Our Lord Jesus Christ offered them mercy. They could find in Him forgiveness.

The Pharisees didn't offer them anything; they offered them the law, the whip of the law, the discouragements of the law.

It's not surprising to find these self-righteous religionists finding fault with Christ for receiving sinners because they didn't feel like they were sinners. Everything He did irritated them. Everything He did made them angry.

You take His background; they said, "Where's He from?" Somebody said, *"Nazareth; nothing good can come out of Nazareth."* They found fault with His education. They said, *"How does this fellow know letters having never learned?"*

Well, they found fault with His personal habits. They said, *"Why you are a wine-bibber and a gluttonous man."* They found fault with His vocation, they said; *"Well, this is the carpenter."* They found fault with His claims to deity, they said; *"Well, you are a man, you can't be God."*

They resented His compassion for sinners but I am telling you this; *"he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. The well don't need a physician but they that are sick."*

Mercy is for the miserable; it reaches out to the miserable. Grace is for the guilty. Love came to save the lost and salvation is for sinners.

This is the occasion; this is the picture! These sinners all gathered about our Lord; they were listening to Him and these religious fellows were out on the outskirts murmuring and finding fault. They said, *"This man receives sinners; this man eats with sinners; this man is the friend of sinners."*

I will tell you this; the worst thing that they could think to say about Him is the best news you ever heard and the best news I ever heard.

This is when our Lord spake this parable; this is when He spake this parable. This is so vital in understanding the parables of our Lord, who is speaking, to whom is he speaking, and what is He talking about?

These sinners gathered about Him and He was offering mercy, hope, and help and calling them to repentance and faith and the Pharisees began to murmur and say, *"This man receives sinners."* That is when our Lord Jesus Christ spake these parables.

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Did you notice that they all ended practically the same way, these three parts of the story? In **verse 7**, after he had finished talking about the lost sheep, He said the *“joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth?”*

After He finished the story of the lost coin he said, *“There is joy in the presence of angels over one sinner that repented.”* In **verse 24** the father said, *“Come rejoice with me, my son was dead, my son is alive, my son was lost and now he is found, and they began to make merry.”*

That’s the reason that I am saying that it is the work of the Son, the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Father, the redeeming work of the Son, the redeeming work of the spirit, and the welcoming or the receptive work of the Father.

Let’s take the first part of the parable: The lost sheep; I am saying that is indicative, or it reveals the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He said, *“which man of you having a hundred sheep;”* now our Lord is a shepherd; He calls himself, *“our shepherd.”* He is called in the Scripture, *“the good shepherd.”* He is called the *“chief shepherd.”* He is called the *“great shepherd.”*

In **John 10** He says; *“I lay down my life for my sheep. Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring.”* He said in **verse 27**: *“My sheep will hear my voice and they will follow me and I give them eternal life.”*

Well, *“Which man of you having a hundred sheep;”* our Lord has sheep; His Father gave them to Him. The Holy Spirit draws them to Him. He died on the cross to redeem them, but one of His sheep is lost, lost. That is a picture of every one of us, lost.

I don’t know much about the 99. I hear a lot of people who preach on this part of the parable and they spend a lot of time on the 99. I don’t know much about it but I do know what lost means. I know that lost means that *“your sins have separated you from God.”*

I know that lost means away from God without God, without hope, without help, without Christ. Here, this lost sheep; here is the emphasis of this story; it is on that lost sheep and the care and the concern and compassion of that shepherd for that lost sheep.

The Scripture says, *“The shepherd left all.”* Our Lord Jesus Christ left glory and went out into the wilderness. He came down into this world and *“he was made of a woman, made under the law. He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.”*

He came into this world to find His sheep. He came to die for sinners. He came to redeem His own. He searched for His sheep and the Scripture says here, *“Until he found it.”* He said, *“All that my father giveth me will come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*

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“I came down from heaven, not to do my will, but the will of him that sent me and this is the will of him that sent me that of all which he hath given me, I will lose nothing but raise it up at the last day.”

“This is the will of him that sent me that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life and I will raise him up at the last day.”

And it says, *“He searched until he found his sheep.”* He put it on his shoulders and brought it home. He cannot fail. Our Lord Jesus Christ cannot fail; *“He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied.”*

All of His redemptive works; all of His redeeming efforts will be crowned with success. The shepherd personally went out. He went on a given mission and task to find his sheep. He searched for it until he found it.

He put it on his shoulders and brought it home and he called his friends and said, *“Rejoice with me; I have found my sheep. There is joy in heaven over the repentance of one sinner.”* So, you see the work of the Son; that is the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ in this first part of the parable.

Now then, we don't leave it there; our Lord moves on to the next part. He says in the next few verses, *“a lost coin.”* What do we see here in the lost coin? We see the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

Christ said, *“There was a woman, she had ten silver coins and she lost one, it fell in the dust, (a dead, lifeless coin), fell in the dust.”* The woman got a candle and she lit the candle and she hunted and looked all over the house with that candle until she found that lost coin.

When she found it, she called her friends and she said, *“I have found my coin; I have found my coin; rejoice with me.”*

Now, what is missing in this? If we are going to talk about salvation, if we are going to talk about forgiveness, if we are going to talk about redemption, what's missing? There is no suffering, there is no sacrifice, and there is no bloodshed.

Do you see what I am saying? There is no willingly straying away. In the first parable, when we talk about the redemptive work of Christ, the sheep is alive and the sheep strayed away and became lost, helpless to do anything about it, not knowing the way back, unable to come back by itself or on its own.

The shepherd left and went out in the cold and the suffering in the wilderness and shed his blood and went through the thorns, the thickets and battled the beasts, to find that sheep and put it on his shoulder and bring it back; that suffering and sacrifice and substitution; that is the work of Christ.

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But, here is the coin, lifeless and dead, in the dust. Now that is a picture of the sinner. *“We are dead in trespasses and sin.”* We are in the dust of the earth. We are without any hope. We are lying there unaware of our lost state, just like this coin.

But, here is the key to this part of the parable, in revealing to me that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in finding God’s people. She lighted a candle. The house was dark and the floor was dark and where the coin was it was dark. The woman lighted a candle and made light in the room.

It was not so much the woman’s suffering or the woman’s agony or the woman’s sacrifice that revealed the concealed coin or the lost coin, it was the light; it was the light that found the coin. Without the candle, the coin would have never been found.

So, this candle is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and convicts men of sin. The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and reveals Christ to the sinner. The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and David said, *“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path.”*

The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God; that is the instrument or the means that he uses to find God’s sheep. The candle is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God for several things to reveal to us our sins, to reveal to us our Saviour, to bring us to repentance and faith, to teach us the Gospel of Christ.

Now my friends; look at the third part of the parable: There is the lost son. I told you the story. This younger son came unto his father and said, *“Father; give to me the portion of goods that belong to me.”*

The young man got the inheritance and went down to the foreign country and there he wasted it and used it up on sinful living. He became very poor, poverty stricken in walk; he came to himself and he said, *“I am going home.”*

“In my father’s house, the servants have better than what I have; they have bread to spare.” So, on his own, he got up and started north. What’s missing here?

Well, there is no suffering. If you are going to preach the Gospel from the Prodigal Son, how are you going to do it, the whole Gospel? There is no suffering, there is no sacrifice; do you see that?

Secondly: He came to himself! How? Did he just figure this out all by himself? Does a sinner not need the Holy Spirit? Does a sinner not need the Word of God? Does a sinner not need the seeking Spirit and the will and calling of God Almighty?

The Lord Jesus Christ said, *“You will not come to me that you might have life.”* If left alone this young man as a picture of a sinner never would have come home; he would have stayed down there. He would have enjoyed it down there.

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He called bitter “sweet” and sweet “bitter;” the natural man does. *“He doesn’t understand the things of God.”* There was no sacrifice, no sin-offering, no revelation; he just came to himself.

We know that none seek the Lord. We know that unless He calls us we will not call on Him unless He seeks us we will not seek Him. *“Herein is love, not that we love God but God loved us.”* God called us.

So, this is what we have in this part of the story. When this young man was far off, *“a great way off* the Scripture says, *the father saw him and ran to meet him.”*

In other words, the father loved him when he was home; the father loved him when he was down there in that foreign country. The father loved him when he came back and the father went out and welcomed him and received him. This is a picture of God the Father’s welcoming grace, the Father’s welcoming mercy.

What is the chief glory of the shepherd? Now, when is the shepherd in his greatest glory, when he is standing there in green pastures, watching over the sheep, walking by still waters, there are no wild beasts or animals and all the sheep are present and accounted for and he is watching them graze?

Is that his greatest glory or is it when you see the shepherd coming back from that quest having found his lost sheep, and his clothes are torn, and his forehead is bleeding, and blood is streaming down his arms and his back where he has fought the beasts and where he is gone through the thorns and the thistles and briars and the wooded areas and over the desert?

His mouth is dry and he is thirsty and weary but he is victoriously returning with his sheep; that is the shepherd’s greatest glory.

What is the father’s greatest glory when the spoiled boy comes to him and he is issuing out of his alms house all that this young man wants, giving him whatever he wants? He is a doting father, a loving father, just shoveling out all that the boy wants; when is he in his greatest glory?

I will tell you; when that boy who sinned against heaven in the father’s sight, who had wasted the father’s inheritance, who has brought shame upon the father’s name, who has disgraced his parents and his friends and his family, who lived in the worst kind of life in a foreign country; here he comes back dirty, filthy, ragged, and unshaven.

The father runs out there and falls on his neck and kisses him. That’s the father’s greatest glory. I’m saying unto you; this is what this parable is all about. The first part of it is the work of the Son in redemption, suffering, sacrifice, the shepherd leaving all and going out to find his sheep and searching until he finds it and giving himself.

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Christ suffered for our sins; He paid our debt and He brought us home. The way that we are called to faith in Him is the Holy Spirit using the Word of God; *“of his own will begat he us with the Word of truth.”*

“We are begotten again unto a living hope, not with corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, the Word of God, that liveth and abideth forever.” The Holy Spirit uses the light of the Word, the candle of the Word, to find God’s sheep.

Through the light of the Word we have revealed to us what we are, where we are, what we need, and who can meet that need for His glory?

Then, we see in the latter part of that parable the father; he is looking for the returning son. He has been standing there a long time waiting for that son to be brought home and he sees him coming and he goes out to meet him.

He falls upon his neck and he kisses him. He bestows upon him the best fatted calf, shoes for his feet, a ring for his finger and a robe for his back, everything that he needs through his grace.

I would like for you take the book of **Ephesians** and turn with me to **chapter 1** of **Ephesians**. In the first chapter of the book of **Ephesians** you will have this very truth taught as the apostle Paul opens this epistle to the Ephesians:

Beginning with **verse 3 down through verse 7**, you have the work of the Father in redemption. It says; *“God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ according as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”*

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein, he made us accepted in the beloved.” Now; there is the Father’s work; He chose us, He blessed us, He received us, and He accepted us.

Now, you start with **verse 7** and you have the Son’s work: *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin.”* In other words, Christ redeemed us.

Then it says, *“He enlightened us.”* Then it says in the next verse: *“He enriched us by bringing to us an inheritance, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.”* That is the inheritance. This is *“all to the praise of the glory of his grace.”*

Then, in the next two verses, **verses 13 and 14**, you have the work of the Holy Spirit: *“In whom you trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom you believed, and after you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”*

My friend; this is one parable in three parts, the glorious redemptive work of the Son, the revealing power of the Spirit, and the welcoming embrace of the heavenly Father for those who come!

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