

***THE GREATEST STORIES EVER TOLD:
PARABLES OF JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE***
Week Five: *The Lost Sheep & The Lost Coin*
Hannaford Street Bible Church
November 29, 2020
Class Notes

Our Purpose together will be to:

- Instill a love and excitement for studying and learning the Word of God.
- Increase our trust in the reliability of Scripture, specifically the Gospel of Luke
- Understand and use the Six Steps for studying a parable and be able to apply those steps of interpretation to other relevant biblical passages.
- Learn a basic understanding of Hebrew poetry and be able to recognize it in other biblical passages.
- Understand some of Jesus' theology from his parables.
- Apply the parables we study to our lives.

I. THE LOST SHEEP

Luke 15:1-7: *Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."*

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

A. Step One: Setting -

1. *Luke 9:51* says, *As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.* Jesus continues on his way to Jerusalem.
2. *Luke 15:1-3* says: *Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."* The closer Jesus gets to Jerusalem the more intense his conflict with the Pharisees over his Messiahship and the Kingdom of God. *Luke 15*

represents a turning point in that conflict. Jesus will push them to decide about who he is and whether to follow him as Messiah.

3. The three parables in *Luke 15* intensify in focus over who or what is lost, from one in 100, to 1 in 10, to 1 in 2.

4. The basic problem the Pharisees had with Jesus was their idea of repentance. The Pharisees taught a process of repentance that had three parts. First repentance meant one openly confessed one's sin. Second, one demonstrated one's sincerity for repentance in some manner. Then third, one compensated for the damage of one's sin in some way. For instance, if one stole some money one paid it back. If one couldn't do those three things then one could not repent and therefore was excluded from the Kingdom of God and God's forgiveness.

5. Tax collectors and sinners were considered unclean by the Pharisees because they could not meet the Pharisees criterion for repentance. They were people who made their money through dishonest means, or were adulterers, or people who lived immoral lives. Sinners were people who did not follow the letter of the Law or who held a dishonorable job, like shepherds, peddlers, tanners, shopkeepers, camel drivers. These were all part of what the Pharisees called "despised trades." They were poor, people of the land, who were unclean and had no civil rights.

6. For the Pharisees, table fellowship showed a profound acceptance and desire for relationship. Eating a meal with someone was accepting him or her. They accused Jesus of eating with people, accepting people, who were unrighteous and were excluded from God's people. Jesus accepted and ate with people the Pharisees believed could not repent and therefore could not enter the Kingdom.

7. The great debate is now engaged between Jesus and the Pharisees over eating with sinners. The Pharisees expect a debate like a rabbi; they receive a parable told to them like any other simple villager. They are talked to as if they are shepherds, one of their despised trades.

B. Step Two: Original Audience -

1. Pharisees—scribes?
2. Disciples-believers?
3. Crowd-general?

C. Step Three: Literary Structure –

- A** Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep
B and loses one of them.

- C** Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country
- 1** and go after the lost sheep
- 2** until he finds it? And when he finds it,
- 3** he joyfully puts it on his shoulders
- 4** and goes home.
- 4'** Then he calls his friends and neighbors together
- 3'** and says, 'Rejoice with me;
- 2'** I have found
- 1'** my lost sheep.'
- A'** I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven
- B'** over one sinner
who repents
- C'** than over ninety-nine righteous persons
who do not need to repent.

Notes:

1. The 2 kinds of sheep correspond to the two kinds of people in verse 7. The focus of the parable is on the lost sheep.
2. The 99 drop out of the story while in the open country. They are still in the open country and not yet home by the end in verse 7.
3. The climax of the parable is joy at the restoration of the lost sheep to the community.

D. Step Four: Cultural Background –

1. It is possible that Jesus has in mind *Ezekiel 34:2-4* as background for this parable.
"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.'" Ezekiel 34:2-4
2. Jesus speaks to the Pharisees as if they are shepherds, which would only infuriate them because they taught that shepherds could not enter the Kingdom. They were on the Pharisees list of despised trades because they could not repent according to the Pharisees' teaching.

3. A Middle-Easterner never loses anything because one never blames oneself, that would be losing face. The sheep wandered off; one didn't lose it.
4. The 99 are left in the wilderness probably with other shepherds who would later bring them back to the sheep pens in the village.
5. The 99 have value because if one of them is lost the chief shepherd will look for it too.
6. The search for the lost sheep could have taken days to complete.
7. The shepherd carries the sheep back himself, taking the burden on himself. He accepts this difficult task with joy, carrying the sheep draped over his shoulders.
8. The shepherd returns and rejoices with the community, which would have suffered the loss because the flock is probably owned by neighbors, friends, uncles, cousins etc.
9. The 99 righteous who need no repentance don't exist. There is subtle humor here.

E. Step Five: Original Decision-Response –

Pharisees: We, the shepherds of Israel, have lost our "sheep" and we should rejoice that someone has found them, rather than complain against him, even if he radically redefines repentance.

F. Step Six: Theological Themes –

1. Jesus puts everyone on the same ground before God. There are no spiritual elites (the righteous who do not need to repent).
2. The shepherd does four things: Accepts responsibility for the loss; searches without counting the cost; rejoices in the burden of restoration; rejoices with the community at the success of restoration. Implicit in these actions is Jesus' cross.
3. An unconditional grace is exhibited that seeks the lost until they are found. There is also unconditional love for the lost. God loves sinners!
4. Jesus outlines a new definition of repentance, being found. Repentance in the parable is a passive act, one accepts being found and quits wandering off because God is searching for his lost sheep.
5. Jesus criticizes the righteous who believe they do not need repentance.
6. The lost can be found!

7. Heaven rejoices when one sinner repents and turns to God! This expresses the heart of the gospel: God's love for sinners and his desire that they be saved.

II. THE LOST COIN

Luke 15:8-10: "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

A. Step One: Setting - The same as *The Lost Sheep*.

B. Step Two: Original Audience - The same as *The Lost Sheep*.

C. Step Three: Literary Structure –

A...Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins

B...and loses one.

C...Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it,

D...she calls her friends and neighbors together and says,

D'...'Rejoice with me;

C'...I have found

B'...my lost coin.'

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

Notes:

1. The only link with *The Lost Sheep* is the first word, "or".
2. Once again the center of the parable is the shared joy with the community at finding that which was lost.

D. Step Four: Cultural Background –

1. Jesus subtly identifies the Pharisees with the woman who lost her coin. This would have incensed them because women were seen as second class. The rabbis said it was unseemly to teach a woman the Law of Moses and let her study the Scriptures.

2. Middle-Eastern women carry their wealth in a chain of coins around their neck. It is possible the woman has lost one of her coins in her chain. This is her financial security and was referred to as "the woman's bank." This was all she had if she were divorced.
3. A village house has a dirt floor and so a coin could be easily hidden or lost. The windows are high for security reasons and so even in daylight a lamp would be needed for the dark corners.
4. She is more responsible than the shepherd for she loses the coin in her house. Sheep could wander off on their own in wide open country. The coin has no mind of its own. Many days would pass without a peasant woman leaving her house, so she knows she lost it in the house.
5. The shepherd had 100 sheep in the wilderness, the woman is inside her house.
6. She accepts responsibility for losing the coin.
7. When she finds it, it is cause for great celebration. Village life is dull, and it would give her a good excuse for a party with the other women of the village.
8. Jesus again emphasizes not only the rejoicing of the community at the finding of that which was lost, but also of heaven itself!

E. Step Five: Original Decision-Response –

Pharisees: We should rejoice at the restoration of our lost rather than complain. The "lost" are within the house of Israel and with diligence we could find them.

F. Step Six: Theological Themes –

1. Many of the same themes occur in this parable as in *The Lost Sheep*.
2. Jesus elevates women in a quiet way. Like the Pharisees she has lost something of value, but she is shown to be better than they, in that she goes on an all out search for her lost coin. Jesus implies a criticism of the Pharisees' attitude towards women as second class.
3. There is an intensified search for the lost. She does everything she can to find her coin. God did everything he could to find us too, even giving the life of his One and Only Son!
4. There is an intensified assurance that the lost can be found. The coin is in the house not out in the open country. Searching for and finding the lost is not an impossible task. Neither is proclaiming the gospel!

5. There is an intensified level of responsibility and blame over the loss in this parable. The woman admits she lost the coin. She accepts responsibility for seeking for that which was lost. We need to do the same. Lost people matter to God and they need to matter to us too!

6. There is an escalating value of worth in this parable from 1 in 100 to 1 in 10. In the next parable it will be 1 in 2.

7. Jesus reminds the Pharisees that heaven itself rejoices when a lost sinner is found. Why can't they?

8. Though it has not yet happened, the story of the saving of Zacchaeus the tax collector in *Luke 19* is a perfect illustration of what Jesus is trying to tell the Pharisees here.

NEXT WEEK (December 6): *The Two Lost Sons – Luke 15:11-32*