

## The One Where Everything is Lost and Then Found

Luke 15

Parables series #4

January 29, 2023

### PreSermon Comments

- More than ever, we need imagination to live as citizens of the kingdom

### Introduction

- Lots of reasons to throw a party: holiday, birthday, retirement, “just because”
  - Imagine your neighbors having a party, and it’s kinda late, they’re loud
  - Imagine they say “clean bill of health for my kid”

### The Leaders’ Complaint

**Luke 15** <sup>1</sup> All the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and scribes were complaining, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” <sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable...

Context. It’s not just that the Pharisees are cranky

- Israelites chosen by God to bring blessing to the whole earth
- Covenant through Moses has a high bar, a special role
- Centuries of unfaithfulness leading to eventual exile
- Eventual return to the Promised Land, intense emphasis on Torah faithfulness
- Pharisees often get a bad rap, rightly so, but remember what their aim is:
  - Problem is that they lost the plot, God’s mercy and grace empower godly living
  - Adding rules on top of rules, but also resentment towards bad people turning back

*\*Notice that Luke says “this parable” and then Jesus tells three | Supposed to be taken together*

*\*\*All three deal with lostness and found-ness (is that a word?) | Central thread: sourness vs. rejoicing*

### Parable 1: The Lost Sheep

**Luke 15** <sup>4</sup> What man among you, who has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open field and go after the lost one until he finds it? <sup>5</sup> When he has found it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, <sup>6</sup> and coming home, he calls his friends and neighbors together, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my lost sheep!’ <sup>7</sup> I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don’t need repentance.

- Bad business to leave the 99. Not normal behavior, exaggerated | **Reckless??**
- Indicating a deep passion: “*joyfully* puts it on his shoulders” and “rejoice with me”
- Notice: there will be more joy in heaven...whose joy in heaven?
- Righteous people who don’t need repentance...hold onto that one for later

## Parable 2: The Lost Coin

**Luke 15** <sup>8</sup> Or what woman who has ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup> When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found the silver coin I lost!' <sup>10</sup> I tell you, in the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who repents.

*\*I always think of my mother when I read this parable: spiritual gift of finding things*

- Silver coin = drachma = 1 day's wages
  - U.S. hourly avg. + 27.62 x 8 = \$225
- Look at the same thread: "rejoice with me!"
- Notice: joy in the presence of the angels | Who is rejoicing here? Not the angels...

## Parable 3: The Lost Son

*\*Often called the parable of the prodigal son | Prodigal = excessive, wasteful*

*\*\*Misnomer: there are two sons, and it's more about the father than the sons*

*\*\*\*Get the book "The Prodigal God" by Tim Keller*

**Luke 15** <sup>11</sup> He also said, "A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.' So he distributed the assets to them.

- Assets = Gk *bios* = life

<sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. <sup>15</sup> Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to eat his fill from the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything.

- Think about the Jewish context here = literally nothing lower

<sup>17</sup> When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I'll get up, go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. <sup>19</sup> I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers." ' <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

- Portrait of true repentance here: humbling, "sinned against heaven and you", do whatever it takes to make it right

But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him.

- Old men don't run? Maybe. But either way, look at the passion in his heart

<sup>21</sup> The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father told his servants, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup> because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.

- Third party in a row for Jesus' stories

<sup>25</sup> Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he summoned one of the servants, questioning what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother is here,'

he told him, 'and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'<sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and didn't want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him.

- Notice here the passion of the father

<sup>29</sup> But he replied to his father, 'Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends.'<sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.'<sup>31</sup> 'Son,' he said to him, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.'<sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

- From here, Jesus tells two more parables in which the joy-less characters face judgment
  - Not-so-veiled way of saying "you're not so righteous, your heart is cold and unloving. You need to repent or you will face judgment."

\*FCF = less lostness, more about cold-heartedness

- Rejoicing and compassion and running and searching and love

Big idea: Because of his passionate love, God's rescues us and invites us into his joy

### Fully Alive

- Creation = enjoy God
- Sin = numb and dead
  - Numb and dead face after a filling
  - Common biblical metaphor of a stony heart
- Salvation = coming alive
  - Not just Jesus' death for forgiveness, but his resurrection for new life
    - New spiritual life now, new physical life at the end of the age
- Life = God's passion in us

(big idea) Objection: What about the doctrine of the impassibility of God?

- I am using the word "passion" in a good way, like many do
- In older times, the word "passion" was a negative: overcome by outside forces
  - Have you ever experienced an emotion like that? Overwhelmed and out of control?
- Distinction: affection vs passion.
  - Affection: warmth + choice + thought
  - Passion: unrestrained +
- Context: Greco-Roman gods were fickle. YHWH is not like that
- God's emotional life is unlike ours. He is far more emotionally healthy

God doesn't feel love or is overwhelmed by love...he is love

God is sovereign over all things...he is not threatened

God chooses relationship with those who cause him pain...freely and intentionally

**Derek Rishmawy** The doctrine of impassibility affirms that God did not incarnate himself of necessity to relieve his own unbearable suffering...Instead, in Christ, God freely, willingly, and sovereignly endured suffering, actively making it his own so that ours would be put to an end. To affirm God's impassibility is to confess that God's action in Christ is nothing other than the beautifully gratuitous outpouring of his invincible, unsurpassable, enduring love for his wayward creatures—it is the foundation of grace itself.

### Imagine the Kingdom

(big idea) What is God's disposition toward you?

- Smiling? Throwing a party? Rejoicing? Delighted in your repentance?

(big idea) What makes you numb?

- Seth Haines, *The Book of Waking Up* | Alcoholism, but really any pleasure
- Stuff of earth to numb the pain, but it numbs us to pleasures from God
- Paradox: chasing pleasure but ending up numb
- Salvation is waking up to the divine love of God

(big idea) How can we share God's passion?

- What non believers in your life need to know this powerful love of God?