

Luke 15

Main idea: God searches for sinners, rejoices when a sinner repents of their sin and has compassion for the lost.

v1-2 Jesus is talking to the tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees and teachers of the law are indignant that Jesus is spending time with them. By eating with them Jesus is sharing fellowship and being open to them. This went against the Pharisees as they despised sinners. Jesus tells these parables to the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

"From Jesus' perspective, the sinners are those who, like the prodigal son are lost and alienated from the Father and need to be restored." Garland, *ECNT Luke*

v4-7 The Pharisees were self-righteous in their own minds but Jesus tells them that God rejoices over one sinner who repents more than '99' righteous persons who think they do not need to repent. It is important to note, that **Jesus is the shepherd here and that he is constantly searching for the lost**. His heart is a one of compassion for the lost. The rescued sheep enjoys safety and intimacy with the shepherd.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Luke 19:10

"The parable also pictures the shepherd (Jesus) taking the initiative in seeking the lost," Constable, *Notes on Luke*

"God not only wants them back; God will take endless trouble to find them and bring them back". Garland, *ECNT Luke*

Are you self-righteous this morning?

Do you seek out the lost?

Do you grumble against sinners or do you pray for them?

What keeps you away from people who need Christ?

"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst." 1 Timothy 1:15

v8-10 This parable is similar to the first in that just as the shepherd searches for the lost sheep the woman searches for the lost coin. The woman rejoices over the lost coin. **God rejoices when a sinner confesses and repents of their sin.**

"Each individual is precious to God. He grieves over every loss and rejoices whenever one of his children is found and brought into the kingdom. Perhaps we would have more joy in our churches if we shared Jesus' love and concern for the lost." NIV, *Life Application Bible*

This is in complete opposition to the grumbling of the Pharisees. Jesus repeats the point in these parables for the sake of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Throughout the Gospel of

Luke, they have been stubborn, hard hearted and refuse to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, God's chosen one. The attitude of the Pharisees is summed up in Luke 18:9-14

"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: **10** "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' **13** "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' **14** "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 18:9-14

The Pharisees and teachers of the law believe that they are justified before God because of their strict adherence to the law and duty to religion. However, God looks at the heart of man. God justifies those sinners who repent.

Are you hiding behind a mask of religion this morning?

Let's now look at the heart of the Father in the parable of the lost son.

v11-31 The son asks for his 'share of the estate'. This would have been a terrible insult to the father. The son is literally saying that he wishes that his father were dead! We see the generosity of the father in this situation. God has given us a free choice as humans and allows us to go our own way.

v15,16 For Jews, pigs were unclean animals. This would have meant that in Jewish eyes, the job of feeding pigs was the lowest point a person could stoop to. The son has hit rock bottom! He is on skid row by his own actions!

Are you at rock bottom in life?

Have you sunk to a place of hopelessness and despair?

There is one who can rescue you from the pit - his name is Jesus Christ.

v17-19 The son 'comes to his senses'. This means that he wants to confess his sins and repent of them before his father. Many people find salvation when they are at rock bottom. God specializes in rescuing people when they are at their lowest point.

v20 The Father runs to the son. This would have been a dignified man of respect. He would not have run anywhere! It is out of his love for his son that he runs. He has been looking out for him and intentionally searching. **God's heart is one of compassion for the lost.** No matter what the son has done, the father loves him. No matter what you have done today or how great your sin is, God loves you this morning and is willing to accept you if you repent of your sins.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might

possibly dare to die. **8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:6-8

Do you have a heart of compassion for the lost?

v21 The son confesses and repents of his sin.

v22-24 The father puts a ring on the son's finger as a sign that he is part of the family. He restores him to his place of honor within the family with the best robe. When we confess and repent of our sin, we are not only forgiven, we are accepted into God's family and given a place of honor.

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— **13** children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." John 1:12-13

"Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." Romans 8:17

Again we see the Father celebrating when a sinner comes into the family of God.

"For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate." Luke 15:24

Are you dead to God this morning?

Are you lost?

Are you ready and willing to repent?

God loves you and you can be found by him. You can be alive in Christ if you repent and confess your sin to him. You too, can be part of God's family and have an intimate relationship with the Father.

Lord Jesus, I know that I am lost. I know that I am a sinner. I now confess my sin and I am sorry for it. Please forgive me. I want to know of your compassion. I want to be found by you. I want to have intimacy with you. Please allow me to come into your family so that we might have fellowship together. Amen.

v25-31 With regards to the older son I believe that Jesus is referring to the Pharisees and teachers of the law. There are some close parallels: 1) The Pharisees and teachers of the law grumble about sinners as does the older brother, 2) The Pharisees and teachers of the law disrespect Jesus just as the older brother disrespects his father, 3) The Pharisees and teachers of the law are bitter and unforgiving towards sinners just as the older brother is bitter and unforgiving towards his sinful younger brother, 4) The Pharisees and teachers of the law serve God out of duty but with no joy i.e. they work hard at being religious. Similarly, the older brother 'slaves' for the father. There is no love relationship between the older brother and the father, it is purely out of duty.

Do you resent God's gracious forgiveness towards others?

As a church, do we welcome any redeemed person no matter what their sinful background?

Do we think that some forgiven sinners are worse than ourselves?

If we let our self-righteousness get in the way of our rejoicing when people get saved, we are no better than the Pharisees.