

THE LOST SON

Text: Luke 15:11-32

Key Word: Lost

Key Thought: Jesus Seeks to Save Everyone Who Is Lost

This third part of one of the most famous parables of Jesus was spoken to the **same people** (Pharisees, scribes, tax collectors and sinners 15:1); on the **same occasion** (on the Sabbath day in the house of a prominent Pharisee 14:1); **to bring out the central message that God wishes to dispense His grace and mercy to all who are lost.**

The sheep was wandering, the silver coin was lost and the prodical son was perishing.

Commentators describe this parable in many ways . . .

It has been called,

"the crown of all parables"

George Murray said that it is

"the most divinely tender and most humanly touching story ever told on earth."

Charles Dickens described it as,

"the finest story ever written"

Jesus was able to ...

"touch the heart strings of man with tenderness and grace."

Herbert Lockyer

This Parable Can Be Properly Divided into 3 Stages

- I. THE REJECTION OF HOME (15:11-16)**
- II. THE RETURN TO HOME (15:17-20)**
- III. THE RECEPTION AT HOME (15:20-31)**

I. THE REJECTION OF HOME (15:11-16)

Jesus moves His thoughts from the despised shepherd and poor woman to that of a home. This story centres around a father and his 2 sons. The parable hints to us that both sons were lost. The younger of the two was probably about 17 years because marriage normally took place 18-20 years of life.

According to Deuteronomy 21:17, if there were only two sons, the eldest son would receive a double portion of the moveable property for an inheritance. If a son requested his entitled inheritance before the death of the father, the father had the legal right to reduce that inheritance to two-ninths.

The father also retained the right to dispose of the inheritance as he wished. **Once the son was granted his request, he deprived himself of any future claims to the estate.** The younger son was thus entitled by law to his share, though he had no right to claim it while his father was still alive.

The text indicates that the father granted the unusual request without argument. **The young son set out with a craving for a false independence.** The "distant country" was far enough that he would not be under any parental restraint.

Augustine suggested that it represented,

"a forgetfulness of God."

Paul, the apostle would probably describe it as a life,

"alienated from the life of God."

A vast number of Jews left their homeland for the money-making possibilities of the bigger cities. But this son set out to recklessly waste his money. He tried to live in the fast lane. It was contrary to his upbringing. It was directly against the will of his father.

In his reckless lifestyle he had forgotten about preparing for the future. His so-called friends devoured all that he had and then they forsook him at his time of need. A famine broke out that affected the whole region. People though can be in the midst of plenty and still sense a famine in their lives.

He attached himself to a Gentile. How those words must have cut deeply into the hearts of the Pharisees. Even worse was the additional thought that this prodigal son would feed swine. This was a forbidden occupation for a Jew.

I. THE REJECTION OF HOME (15:11-16) (Contd.)

"None may rear swine anywhere"

BK 7:7

The Old Testament stated,

"And the pig though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean to you. 8. you must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean to you."

Leviticus 11:7,8

Other Jewish teachings stated it even more strongly,

"Cursed is the man who rears swine or who teaches his son Greek philosophy."

BK 82b

This prodical reached a point that he even longed to eat the food of swine which were husks or bean-like pods of the carob tree. Such a thought would be considered a degradation.

It has been written,

"When the Israelite is reduced to Carob-pods, (eaten only by the very poor people), then he will repent."

Jesus clearly portrayed the pit that people can be lowered into when they reject their Father's home.

II. THE RETURN TO HOME (15:17-20)

This young man had to reach the bottom before he looked up. In his misery he realized that he had been abased because of his wrong doing. He had to "come to himself" before he could "come to his father." This extreme hardness caused him to reflect upon home.

*** When I was about 15 years of age I also ran away from home. My anger got the best of me and I felt that the situation I was living in was just not worth all the trouble.

I found the biggest suitcase and filled it with everything I could. I made it to the corner and began to hitch hike.

It wasn't long before someone picked me up and we headed for the big city -Cornwall. On the way I started thinking about what I was doing. I asked the driver to let me out because "*I forgot something.*"

I returned home and began the process of facing and coping with my problems. I had a lot to learn. ***

Vine's dictionary of N.T. words points out that the beginning of repentance came about with a return to sound consciousness.

This barefoot vagabond began to be open to the call from home. **Come back, my son, come back!** His thoughts began to reflect upon the abundance of his father's servants. Why should he maintain a hardened heart and starve to death.

There was no more thought of "give me my inheritance", instead it was a humbleness that would cry out,

"make me like one of your hired men."

Luke 15:19

He knew that he deserved nothing. He had squandered his money and had ignored whatever obligation, legally or morally that he ever had.

He went over in his thoughts how he would approach his father before setting out to accomplish the journey back to the "*far country*" from which he had originally come. **It meant accepting the life of his father on his father's terms.**

II. THE RETURN TO HOME (15:17-20) (Contd.)

WHEN WE CEASE TO STRUGGLE

*** A drowning boy was struggling in the water. On the shore stood his mother in a agony of fright and grief. By her side a strong man seemed indifferent to the boy's fate. Again and again the mother's appeal to save her boy appeared to fall on deaf ears. No one moved to help.

By and by the desperate struggle of the boy began to cease. He was losing strength. He rose to the surface once more, this time weak and helpless.

The man leaped into the water and brought the boy safely to shore.

"Why did you not save my boy any sooner?" asked the grateful mother.

"Madam, I couldn't as long as he struggled. He would have dragged us both to certain death. But when he grew weak and ceased to struggle, then it was easy to save him."

It's when we cease from our own works and depend helplessly upon Him that we realize how perfectly able He is to save without any aid from us. ***

James H. McCokey

Are you struggling in a way that will bring you certain death? Perhaps you've reached the point where your ready to reach out and accept the help of others?

III. THE RECEPTION AT HOME (15:20-31)

The son's word's were unnecessary for the father. The father saw him coming a long way off as if he was continually waiting for the return. **It was the father and not the son who took the initiative to restore the broken relationship.** It is like king David who summoned his son, (II Samuel 14:33) even though Absalom had attempted to take the throne from his father.

The compassion of the father was beyond all measure. The word "***compassion***" means that his "***vitals moved.***" What a picture of the heart of God as He welcomes a returning, repenting sinner. God goes more than half way to meet us.

The father ran and covered his son with kisses. The son was embraced in an overflowing manifestation of the father's tender love for the wayward son.

III. THE RECEPTION AT HOME (15:20-31) (Contd.)

The young son began to repeat his pre-determined confession but before the son had an opportunity to say what he had planned,

"make me like one of your hired men"

Luke 15:19

Firstly, the father began to set in motion the extent of his act of forgiveness. Quickly the servants were summoned and ordered to bring the best robe - a wardrobe of a son. **Our God wishes to adorn us with the best robe - that of His righteousness.**

"My Lord, I have no clothes to come to Thee; My shoes are pierced and broken with the road; I am torn and weathered, wounded with the goad, and soiled with tugging at my weary load. And more, I need Thee. A very prodical I stagger into Thy presence, Lord of me."

"Masterpiece of Religious Verse"
George MacDonald

Secondly, the signet ring was placed upon his finger as a symbol of the union between the father and son. It was also a symbol of authority. The son had the legal right to the family's inheritance.

Thirdly, shoes were placed upon his feet. Only members of the household wore shoes, slaves were kept barefoot. At the same time, they were only worn in the house of the master, all guests had to take them off upon arrival. Hence, they indicated authority and possession as well as freedom.

Finally a feast was made so that there could be a time of celebration. Not just any animal was chosen. Here is a reference to an animal specifically fed and kept to be slaughtered on a special occasion.

"For this son of mine was dead and is now alive again; he was lost and is found."

Luke 15:24

All the noise brought the elder brother to the house. It is strange that he had not been summoned before this. Perhaps he would return to the house only after completing his daily duty. He quickly found out that his younger brother had returned safely home.

III. THE RECEPTION AT HOME (15:20-31) (Contd.)

The brother became so angry that the father had to go out to speak with him. Perhaps he feared that this younger brother was returning to collect more of the inheritance. The elder brother was a picture of the Pharisees that refused to examine their reason for their labour. The elder son had been faithful, never disobedient . . . so why was HE never even given a young goat (a cheaper meal).

The bitterness swelled up to the point that he would not even address the prodigal son as his brother. The father's livelihood had been affected by this squanderer of wealth. He had been given an excellent chance to make it. How could he return and be given so much love? He deserved to be punished for squandering his **father's inheritance**.

Instead of rebuking the father continued in his words of affection. Legally the elder son would inherit the farm. **If, as the elder son, he had not already enjoyed the fruits of his hard work, it was because he had not asked. It was not because the father was unwilling to give it.**

It reminds me of the words of Jesus' brother ...

*"You do not have, because you do not ask God.
3. When you ask, you do not receive, because you
ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what
you get on your pleasures."*

James 4:2,3

The impact of the father's love is seen knowing that the younger son had asked with wrong motives to spend on his own pleasures. **The father did not look at the materialism that had been lost but rather he looked at the son that had been found.** It was as if his son had been brought back to life.

Therefore, celebrate and be glad.

Who is the Father?

Do we not have painted before us one of the greatest masterpieces of our tender, loving, and forgiving Father in heaven?

Who is the Prodigal?

Does he not represent all who reject the Father's love and waste their God-given provisions in a selfish, riotous manner?

III. THE RECEPTION AT HOME (15:20-31) (Contd.)

Who is the Elder Brother?

Does he not represent the Pharisees and all like them who resent Christ's interest for sinners?

Truly, Jesus once again made known His response to the statement of the Pharisees and scribes in verse 2 . . .

"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Luke 15:2

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Date: Jan 29/17

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: And Because we are Sons - D

THE LOST SON

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III. THE RECEPTION AT HOME (15:20-31) - *Luke 15:19; Luke 15:24; James 4:2,3; Luke 15:2*

Who is the Father?

Who is the Prodigal?

Who is the Elder Brother?

"This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."