

# LOST SHEEP - LOST COIN - LOST SON

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LUKE 15:1-24 • TV-042A

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By

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## **Luke 15:1-24**

I want you to open your Bible to the book of **Luke chapter 15**. The passage of Scripture I'm going to use for my text goes from **verses 1-24**. Now I won't have time to read all of these verses and comment on each one but all of you are familiar with this parable found in **Luke 15**. It's the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.

Now let me read a few of these verses, just paraphrase them. You follow in your Bible, **Luke 15:4**; "What man of you having a hundred sheep; if he lose one doth not leave the ninety nine and go out into the wilderness and seek the lost sheep until he finds it. And finding it he puts it on his shoulders and brings it home calling his neighbors and friends to rejoice with him, I've lost my sheep; I found it."

And then the second part of this parable begins: "And what woman having ten pieces of silver; if she lose one, doth not light a candle and seek till she finds it? And when she finds it she calls her neighbors and friends and has them rejoice with her for the lost coin is found."

And then a man having two sons; one of them stayed home and one of them took his inheritance into a foreign country and wasted it. And he came to himself and returned to his father and the Scripture tells us; that the father ran to welcome him, and had them kill the fatted calf, and everyone rejoiced with him, and he said, "this my son which was lost, is found."

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And then each time the Lord says; *“Likewise I say unto you; there is joy in heaven and there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that comes to repentance.”*

Now listen carefully; we’ll learn something today if you’ll stay with me; this is one parable, just one. It’s not three parables, only one parable in three parts. We have here; Mr. Spurgeon use to say, “We have here three sides of a great pyramid, one pyramid with three sides, three sides of Gospel truth.”

But there’s a distinct inscription on each side. Each one of these stories; now this is important, each one of these stories is needful to the other. You don’t tell one these stories without the other; it’s one parable made up of three parts. And each one of these parts, the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, are needful to the other and when you combine the three as the Saviour combined them here in the Word of God.

It says; *“He spake to them a parable,”* then He told them about the lost sheep being found by the shepherd. He told them about the lost coin being found by the woman. He told them about the lost son returning home to the father.

The Saviour combined these three stories and the one parable. And when you combine them they present us with a more complete exposition of the Gospel of redeeming grace than any of the stories could possibly present considered alone.

Now, if you want to understand a parable; we have to have the Holy Spirit to be our teacher; I know that. God’s Word of Scripture is interpreted by Scripture. And the Holy Spirit is the teacher. He is the one who teaches us what God has written.

But, if you want to understand a parable, the first thing you always do is find out the occasion of the parable, in other words, to whom the Lord is speaking and what provoked the parable, what brought it to pass.

Now, if you will, look at **Luke 15:1-2**. Now here; if you’ll read this you’ll understand the reason for this parable and you’ll understand what our Lord was speaking about. In **Luke 15:1-2**; now listen carefully to it:

*“Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him. And the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured saying, this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.”* Then, it was then that our Lord spake this parable unto them.

Now the sinners, the lost people, the publicans, had gathered about Him. Sinful people gathered about the Saviour. He ate with them, He taught with them, and He loved them. They followed Him about. Where you found sinners you found the Saviour. Where you found the Saviour you found sinners because this is His mission.

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He said in **Luke 19:10**, *“The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 1:15**, *“This is a faithful saying (it’s a true saying) it’s worthy of acceptance (by all men), that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.”*

So, it’s not surprising to find our Lord where sinners are. It’s not surprising to find sinners where our Lord was any more than it’s surprising to find sick people in a doctor’s office.

You drive by a doctor’s office and you see a whole crowd of people sitting there in the waiting room. That doesn’t surprise you does it? *“The well have no need of a physician,”* Christ said; it’s sick people that need a doctor. And it’s sinners that need a Saviour.

So, it’s not surprising to find our Lord surrounded by sinners. It’s not surprising to find Him where sinners are and to find sinners where He is. And watch this, it’s not surprising either that the religious leaders, the Pharisees, these self-righteous, moral people, were critical of His congregation. That’s not surprising to me either.

It’s not surprising to me to find sinners around the Saviour and it’s not surprising to me to find the old Pharisees sitting off over there criticizing and mocking and sneering at Him because they felt that they were moral and righteous and good and they certainly would have nothing to do with this type of people. They wouldn’t be found in the company of the immoral. They wouldn’t be found in the company of the ungodly. They wouldn’t be found in the company of sinners.

Listen to me; one of them said, “Now if this man were a prophet He’d know what kind of woman this is that is touching His feet. If this man were a prophet, He wouldn’t let this woman even be in His company.”

That’s the idea of the Pharisee. That’s the attitude of the Pharisee. He’s moral and clean and self-righteous and pure. And rather than feeling compassion for the sinner he feels contempt for the sinner.

Listen to Him, they said; “Look at Him. He collects about Him the riff-raff of our city; look at Him. He’s going to be the guest of a man who’s a sinner; look at Him. He’s the friend of sinners.”

And these words were spoken with sarcasm, they were spoken with scorn, and they were spoken with, I think surprise. They were really surprised that He should associate with such people. These religious self-righteous men could not comprehend the mission of the Master.

They didn’t feel that they were sinners. They didn’t feel that they needed a Saviour and therefore they could not comprehend His mission into this world. And therefore, they looked upon Him with reproach and with contempt and with sarcasm.

But their words of sarcasm and scorn defined His mission. *“This man is the friend of sinners.”* Aren’t you glad? Every one of them can say, “Thank God He is the friend of sinners.”

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If Christ did not receive sinners, then I couldn't come. If Christ did not love sinners there'd be no hope for me. If Christ did not die for sinners, then I would have no hope. I'd be without hope, without help, and without God. He came to save sinners.

So, that's the occasion of the parable. These Publicans and sinners gathered about Him and standing off there to the side were the self-righteous, moral, religious, leaders. They were criticizing and scoffing and sneering at Him. "Look at Him, look at Him; He's the friend of sinners. He doesn't have anything to do with us godly people, but He finds His company in the place of worthless sinners."

Now my friend; listen to me and I want to be as gentle as I can and yet as plain as I can. If you do not see the mercy of God reaching out to the miserable, if you do not see the mercy of God reaching out to the miserable in the person of Christ, you don't understand the Gospel.

You don't understand why Christ came. You don't understand why He died. If you do not see the grace of God reaching out to the guilty, if you do not see in Christ the love of God reaching out to the lost, then you don't understand the Gospel. You haven't comprehended the true mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to this Scripture; turn over there in your Bible, **Romans chapter 5:6**; listen carefully: "*For when we were yet without strength, in due time, (in God's time) Christ died for the ungodly.*" For whom did Christ die, for the ungodly?

Look at **verse 8** if you will; "*God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,*" for sinners, for the ungodly, for sinners. Look at **verse 10**, "*When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.*"

Christ came down here and died on that cross, not as an example, but as a substitute, not as an attempt at reforming the world, but reconciling sinners to God. And when He died on that cross He died for the ungodly. He died for sinners. And He died for enemies.

How many Pharisees do we encounter today? Are you a Pharisee? We need to examine ourselves. Am I a Pharisee? These people who think themselves righteous and think themselves "holier than thou" and think themselves to be objects of God's love are really objects of God's wrath.

Our Lord's hardest words were for the Pharisees. He called them, "*A generation of vipers, (snakes).*" Our Lord Jesus Christ, His kindest words were for sinners because salvation is not of merit, but of mercy. Salvation is not of good works but of grace.

Now that's the occasion for this parable. Gathered about Him were sinners, Publicans, lost people, ungodly, and enemies of God, gathered about Christ, listening to Him and learning from Him.

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Over there were these Pharisees and they were critical, and they were mocking and scoffing and saying these sarcastic things; “Look at Him; He’s the friend of sinners.”

Now **verse 3** says: “*And Christ spake unto them this parable saying, (this parable, not these parables, not three parables, this parable). Which of you having a hundred sheep, a man has a hundred sheep; if he lose one, does not leave the ninety nine and go out into the wilderness and find the lost sheep?*”

*“And when he finds it he puts it on his shoulder and brings it home and says, rejoice with me; this my sheep was lost but is found. There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that comes to repentance, more than over ninety nine just persons who need no repentance.”*

And then He told about the lost coin and the lost son.

Let me show you something. I’m saying that this one parable in three parts. In the parable of the lost sheep; who is the chief character in that parable? Now look at it; it’s not the sheep.

The chief character, the leading character in this part of the parable of the lost sheep, is the shepherd. That’s right! It’s the shepherd upon which our attention is focused. It is His sheep that’s lost. It is the shepherd who loved the sheep.

It is the shepherd who went out to find it. It is the shepherd who searched for the sheep. It is the shepherd who found it. It is the shepherd who put it on his shoulders. It is the shepherd who brought it home. It is the shepherd who said to the people; “Come and rejoice with me; I’ve found my sheep.”

Now Christ presents Himself in the Scriptures as the, “*Good shepherd.*” Our Lord Jesus Christ calls himself, “*The good shepherd. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.*”

He calls Himself, “*The great shepherd.*” He calls himself the, “*The chief shepherd.*” And the good shepherd who loves His sheep; one of them is lost. It’s His sheep. He knows this sheep by name. He loves this sheep.

He has loved this sheep, the Scripture says; “*I’ve drawn thee with an everlasting love. Having loved His own, (always loved them) He loved them to the end.*”

Listen to this Scripture, **John 10:14**; “*I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and am known of mine. I lay down my life for the sheep. Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, to them I must bring.*”

Look at **John 10:26**; “*You believe not because you’re not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me.*” The good shepherd is Christ; the lost sheep; that’s you and that’s me.

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We wandered away. We've fallen, we've departed from God. We've gone astray from the fold and the shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ who loves us; He comes into this world and seeks us. *"He came to seek and to save the lost sheep."*

And His search is a personal search. He came into the world. He walked the world in the flesh. *"He who made the world was in the world and the world knew Him not. We beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. He was numbered with the transgressors."* It was a personal search. The shepherd didn't send somebody else after this sheep; He went after it.

The shepherd didn't delegate some authority to a representative; He went after it. *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself."* It was His sheep and He went out personally to search for it.

And that search was not only personal, but it was a costly service. It cost Him His blood. It cost Him His life. Jesus Christ our Lord gave Himself. It cost Him suffering and agony. It cost Him mocking and humiliation.

It cost Him the death of the cross. It was a costly search. But it was a successful search. It was a persevering search. Look at it; it says; *"He searched until He found it; He searched till He found it."*

**John 6:37-39**; turn there in your Bible. Our Lord said; *"All that my Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which has sent me, that of all which He hath given me I'll lose nothing but raise it up at the last day."*

*"He that seeth the Son and believeth on Him hath everlasting life."*

So when you look at this first side of the pyramid, this first part of the parable, this first part of the story, you see the work of Christ. You see His love for the sheep. You see His compassion for the lost sheep.

You see His willingness to come and die for the sheep. You see His sacrifice in seeking, searching, finding, and bringing the sheep home and rejoicing with His friends.

Now then; who are the ninety-nine? It said, *"A man had a hundred sheep and one of them was lost. Does he not leave the ninety and nine and go out and hunt the lost sheep?"*

Now, notice this; at the end of this part of the story it says; *"There's joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."*

Now, another lesson. If you're studying the Bible and you come across a passage of Scripture like that; the first thing you do in order to help you understand it, is to try to determine what it doesn't mean.

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Now this says; *“There’s joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”* Well now; it can’t mean truly, just, and righteous people, because the Scripture says, *“There’s not a just man upon the earth that sinneth not.”*

It can’t mean that these people are actually just and righteous because the Scripture says; *“There’s none righteous, no not one.”* It can’t mean that there are people on this earth who do not need to repent because; *“God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.”*

And it can’t mean sinners who are already saved because even they daily repent. We don’t stop repenting. Repentance is a continual thing. So, what does it mean? Here’s what our Lord’s saying. The ninety and nine here are people, (the people to whom He spake this parable) the so-called just people and righteous people who don’t think they are sinners. That’s who He’s talking about. Why that’s exactly who He’s talking about.

He’s talking about those people who think they’re not sinners, who think they need no repentance, who think they’re righteous, the very ones to whom He spoke the parable. That’s right!

There’s more joy in heaven over one fallen sinner that really, truly, repents, than over ninety and nine religious, self-righteous, church-going, moral Pharisees, who think they need no repentance.

There’s no joy in heaven over nine hundred and ninety-nine billion of them, yet alone nine hundred and ninety nine or ninety nine. There’s joy over a sinner that truly repents. Now you look at that. That’s exactly right, the lost sheep, searched for, found, brought home by the shepherd.

Now, the second part of this story; it’s a lost coin. He said; *“There’s a woman who had ten coins. She had lost one and she got a light, a candle, and she began, she swept the house and she began to search for that coin.”*

Now who’s the chief character in this story, in this part of the parable, the woman with the candle, not the coin, the woman with the candle? She lost her coin. She got a light. She got a broom. She searched for it. She found it. She called her friends in.

This is the Holy Spirit. That’s right! It represents the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses a light to find the dead sinner. What is the light, the Scripture? *“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”*

The Scripture talks about the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; the light of the Gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in these hearts of ours with the light of the Gospel. That’s right; this is the Holy Spirit.

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The coin is lifeless; it's dead, totally dead. When we describe the work of Christ, the Shepherd; we describe the sheep as being a defenseless, nearsighted, helpless, animal that's wandered away from the fold. And the Shepherd goes out there and finds it and brings it home.

Now; when you describe the work of the Holy Spirit; He works upon dead objects, dead objects. *"They are dead in trespasses and sin."* In fact, the coin is lifeless and dead, representing dead sinners:

*"You hath He quickened who were dead,"* dead to God, dead to Scripture, and dead to life, but also the coin is altogether ignorant of its dead state, of its lost state. It's totally ignorant of its condition. It's totally ignorant of its lost state. Do you see that?

So is the sinner. These Pharisees were totally ignorant of their guilt before God and their lost condition. They were blind, they were deaf, and they were dead.

Also, the lost coin; (now watch this). Whose coin was it? It was the woman's coin. It was the woman's coin when she had it. It was the woman's coin when she lost it. It was the woman's coin lying there in the dust. It was her coin when she found it.

And even so those to whom the Holy Spirit comes with a light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, they belonged to the Lord; they are His, they are His. They always have been His. Christ said, *"I know my sheep, and am known of mine. Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them I must bring."*

And the woman used a candle; she used light. And that's what the Holy Spirit uses to bring sinners to Christ. He uses the light of the Gospel. No sinner is going to come to a knowledge of his sin until he sees his sin, not only by conscience, but in the Word of God and in the law of God.

*"The law is the schoolmaster that brings us to Christ."* The law is the mirror in which we see our sin. But you can't see anything in a mirror if you don't have any light. You can't see anything.

You can stand in a dark room and look at a mirror all night long. You won't see anything. But let somebody turn on a light and then you see it. And a dead, blind, sinner can look at the Bible all his life and he won't see anything but what he wants to see. He won't see anything but what his natural mind enables him to see.

But when the Holy Spirit puts some light on that law and puts some light on that Word and puts some light on those types and puts some light on those promises and prophecies they live. So, without His light there's nothing there. It's just words on paper.

This whole part of the parable, this whole story revolves around the woman with the light looking for the dead coin. And this part of the story pictures the Holy Spirit as He comes with the light of the Gospel, *"The foolishness of preaching,"* the light of the Gospel.

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The Gospel is a seed that quickens the dead sinner. *“How can they call on Him in whom they haven’t believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they haven’t heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”*

And the Holy Spirit comes with the Word which I’m preaching now and illuminates it. Some people sitting out there know what I’m talking about. You’ve experienced it. You say, “Now that’s right; the Holy Spirit bears witness with my spirit that that’s the truth of God. I believe that!”

You’ve been taught of God. A natural man doesn’t understand it. Even so the Holy Spirit takes the light of the Gospel and reveals our sin and our inability and the beauty and glory of Christ.

Now, the third part of the story: The son is lost. He comes home and there’s a father who sees him a great way off and runs to meet him and welcomes him. Who is the chief character in that third part?

It’s not the prodigal son. This is not a parable of the prodigal son; it’s a story of a compassionate, gracious, father. We’ve already talked about Christ seeking His sheep. We’ve already talked about the Holy Spirit with the lost coin, with the light looking for the sinner.

Now; here’s the prodigal coming home and the father stands there and waits for him and welcomes him and says; “Enter my son. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet and a robe on his back and a crown on his head and kill the fatted calf.”

Now this story would not be understood without the other two. For example; there’s no mention here (in the prodigal down there in the foreign country coming home), no mention of God’s love and God’s compassion and the sacrifice of Christ and the suffering and agony of the shepherd coming down to find the sheep.

There’s nothing said here about the light of the Gospel or the work of the Holy Spirit. It would appear that that boy just reasoned his condition and decided he’d come home all by himself, you know, without the work of the Holy Spirit, without the work of the Son.

He just decided he’d come back and get back into the good graces of his father. But it’s not that way; sinners have got to be redeemed. Sinners have got to be reconciled. Sinners have got to be awakened. They’ve got to be regenerated.

But this is a picture of the Father and He stands there with open arms and says; “I’ll remember your sins no more; come on my son. Enter into the joys of your Lord.” So; it’s a beautiful parable.

Our Lord Jesus Christ pictures His work as the suffering sacrifice, the shepherd who finds His sheep and the Holy Spirit who, with the light of the Gospel, illuminates and enlightens the darkened heart. And then the Father who welcomes him home.