

ST JOSEPH THE WORKER
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



Luke 15 contains some of the most well-known parables of Jesus, teaching about God's love, forgiveness, and redemption. Here's a breakdown of the key elements in the chapter, including some notes on each parable and its meaning:

Luke 15 Overview

Luke 15 contains three parables Jesus tells to illustrate the theme of God's joy over the repentance of sinners. These parables emphasize God's compassion, forgiveness, and the value of each person to Him.

1. Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7)

Summary:

Jesus tells a story of a shepherd who has 100 sheep, but one goes astray. The shepherd leaves the 99 and goes in search of the lost one. When he finds it, he joyfully carries it home and calls his friends to celebrate with him.

Key Points:

- The Lost Sheep represents sinners who have gone astray.
- The Shepherd represents Jesus, who seeks out those who are lost and brings them back.
- Rejoicing in Heaven: Jesus emphasizes that there is great rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repents (Luke 15:7). This shows that God values every single person.

Application:

- God's love is personal. He cares for each individual and is willing to go to great lengths to bring them back to Him.
- No one is beyond God's reach, and all are worthy of being found and forgiven.

2. Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

Summary:

A woman has ten silver coins, but she loses one. She lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it. When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her.

Key Points:

- The Lost Coin represents a person who is spiritually lost, valued but in need of being found.
- The Woman represents God, who actively seeks out the lost.
- Joy in Heaven: Jesus again highlights the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10).

Application:

- Just like the woman searching for the lost coin, God is actively searching for those who are lost in sin.
- Every person is of great value to God, and His heart rejoices when they are found.

3. Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

Summary:

A man has two sons. The younger son asks for his inheritance early, leaves for a distant country, and squanders all of it on loose living. When a famine arises, he finds himself in need and decides to return to his father, repenting for his actions. The father, seeing him

from a distance, runs to him, embraces him, and celebrates his return with a feast. Meanwhile, the older son, who has remained faithful, becomes angry and refuses to join the celebration. The father explains that the lost son was dead and is now alive, lost and is now found.

Key Points:

- The Prodigal Son represents sinners who turn away from God but, through repentance, return to Him.
- The Father represents God, full of compassion, waiting for the return of those who have strayed, ready to forgive and restore them.
- The Older Son represents those who may feel self-righteous or begrudge God's grace toward sinners. His resentment reflects a misunderstanding of God's heart.

Application:

- The father's response shows that God's grace is available to all, no matter how far they have gone astray. When we repent, God's forgiveness is immediate and complete.
- The parable challenges us not to harbor bitterness or jealousy toward those who experience God's forgiveness after a period of rebellion.

Theological Themes in Luke 15:

1. God's Unfathomable Love and Mercy:
 - o in all three parables, the central theme is God's boundless love for sinners and His joy over their repentance.
2. The Value of the Lost:
 - o God seeks out those who are lost, and He finds great joy when they are restored. This reflects God's priority on people, especially those who are spiritually lost.
3. The Joy of Repentance:
 - o Repentance and reconciliation with God are cause for heavenly celebration. This highlights how valuable human souls are to God.
4. God's Desire for All to Be Saved:
 - o the parables underscore God's heart for all to be saved, and they challenge self-righteous attitudes that might view repentance as unworthy or excessive.

Key Verses to Reflect On:

- **Luke 15:7 – "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."**
- **Luke 15:10 – "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**
- **Luke 15:24 – "For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So, they began to celebrate.**

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Luke 15

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.
2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

3 Then Jesus told them this parable:
4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

5 And when he finds it, **he joyfully puts it on his shoulders** **6 and goes home.** Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘**Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.**’

7 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.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

9 And when she finds it, **she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I**

15:1–10 The three parables in Luke 15 should be viewed together as showing God’s celebration at the return of the lost. The parables are told in response to the grumbling of the Pharisees at Jesus’ ministry to sinful people (vv. 1–3). “Tax collectors” are regularly grouped together with “sinners” (5:30; 7:34), though “sinners” is the broader term. The first two parables are a matching pair highlighting the successful search of the shepherd for his sheep and the woman for her coin, as well as the joyful celebration in response. The third parable completes the picture with descriptions of the degradation of the lost, the decision to return, the delight of the father, and (returning to the introductory complaints of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law) the disdain of the older brother. Reference to the lowly and lost who lack resources, the response of the repentant, the exclusion from the banquet of those who reject the invitation, and the corresponding rejoicing for the undeserving who are graciously included in the kingdom’s banquet summarize the themes of Luke 13:10—14:35.

have found my lost coin.’

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

The Parable of the Lost Son

11 Jesus continued:

“There was a man who had two sons.

12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So, he divided his property between them.

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.

15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to **feed pigs**.

16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!

18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, **I have sinned against heaven and against you**.

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’

20 So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; **he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.**

21 “The son said to him, ‘**Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer**

15:11–32 The father is the main character of this parable, and reference to the two sons anticipates its two-part nature. The younger son’s disrespectful attitude toward his father is gradually displayed as the boy requests his inheritance, departs, and then squanders his fortune. Eventually, the boy is completely estranged from his family; he lives in poverty, and his job is to feed unclean pigs. The boy has no resources and no help (v. 16). It’s at this point of despair that he realizes that even a servant in his father’s house has an abundance of food in contrast to his own impoverished condition. The son resolves to return to the father, confess his sin against God and his father, and seek mercy to be employed simply as a day laborer, recognizing his own unworthiness to be called a son. The sight of the returning son leads to the father’s compassionate initiative to embrace his son and restore him to his previous status. The son begins his speech, but the father’s urgent response interrupts him before he can request to be a hired worker. The father’s joy is obvious. He gives his son a special robe, ring, and sandals (highlighting the son’s restoration from destitution), as well as orders that the fattened calf be prepared for a celebratory feast. The language of “lost” and “found” (v. 32) highlights the link between this parable and the preceding two (vv. 4–7, 8–10) and indicates that “dead” and “alive” (v. 32) refer to the separation from and restoration to the relationship.

worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate.

24 For this son of mine **was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**' So, they began to celebrate.

25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on.

27 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded with him.

29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends.

30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

31 "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because **this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**'"

Footnotes

Luke 15:8 Greek ten drachmas, each worth about a day's wages

The older son responds with anger to the celebration and the father's actions (vv. 27–28). The older son remains outside and refuses to enter the celebration. His focus on his own actions reflects the self-justification associated with the teachers of the law and the Pharisees in Luke (10:29; 16:15; 18:9). Furthermore, the older son mistakenly (and ironically) perceives his relationship with his father as one of slave to master and portrays the gracious father as unjust. The older son expects his obedience to have earned him celebration. Accompanying this self-justifying language is a corresponding derisive distancing and derogative talk about his younger brother as "this son of yours" (15:30). The father's tender response first reminds the older son of his privileges before turning to the reasons for the celebration. The older son has always had access to the father and his possessions. In the wider context of Luke's Gospel and the introduction to the chapter, this points to the privileged position of the leaders of Israel. The concluding words of the father emphasize the reason for this joyful celebration—the heart of the three parables.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do these parables tell us about God's view of sinners? How should this affect our view of others?
2. How do we see God's grace in the story of the prodigal son, especially in relation to the older son's attitude?
3. What can we learn about forgiveness from the father in the parable of the prodigal son? How does it challenge our own ability to forgive others?
4. How does the idea of rejoicing in heaven when someone repents change the way we view salvation?

Conclusion:

Luke 15 demonstrates the heart of God toward sinners: He loves them, seeks them out, and rejoices when they return to Him. These parables remind us of the boundless grace of God and the need for repentance and restoration. For believers, they call us to a posture of humility, grace, and joy in seeing others come to salvation.