

The Parable of the Lost Sons (Luke 15)

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Introduction: We often need to be reminded about what the work of God really is.

- A. This chapter begins with a snapshot of an ugly attitude. **(Luke 15:1-2)**
 - 1. Somehow the Pharisees in all of their study and religious experience had missed the true nature and work of the Lord.
 - 2. Jesus now tells three parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost sons.
- B. Here we see a moving, vivid picture of the human and divine side of conversion.
 - 1. The focus of the parable concerns the foolish “reasoning” of one in sin but never sees his condition. It is a message to those who are religious but have closed hearts. **(Mt 15:8)**
 - 2. This is contrasted with the example of one who came back to the Lord in an acceptable way. He did not just slip back in.
 - 3. Above all we see the deep concern and the warm welcome of God to the sinner who returned.

I. The Digression of the Sinner (Luke 15:11-13)

A. The demand for independence

- 1. The son got tired of restraint, even though it leads to security and plenty.
- 2. God’s commands are always for our good. We cannot be “free” from Him and prosper! **(Deut 10:13; Rom 6:20-22)**
- 3. Rather than be independent from God, our purpose is to be like God!
 - a. Why love our enemies? **(Matt 5:46)**
 - b. Why give? **(2 Cor 8:9)**

B. Discontentment

- 1. Satan likes to promote the idea that you are being left out.
- 2. Ex. “All my life I have been doing what others wanted”. “It’s my right!”, I deserve it!” This is the spirit described here.

C. Worldly joy

- 1. The Bible admits that sin has its pleasures. **(Heb 11:25; 2 Pet 2:13)**
- 2. What does the world do when they are depressed about things?
- 3. The peer pressure on our young is great. They will think you are crazy not to. The young cannot see death, plus “everyone else is doing it”. **(1 Pt 4:4)**

D. The wasting of one’s substance.

- 1. When you lose a sense of responsibility to God everything else will soon follow.
- 2. This son was not aware or seemed to care that he was throwing it all away. (Ex. I have seen both men and women throw away their family, job and eventually their lives.)
- 3. God has made us to do His will and be busy in it. **(Ecc 12:13; Jas 1:17)**
- 4. What are true riches? Do not throw this away! **(Luke 12:21)**

E. The hypnotic effect of sin.

- 1. Sin gives you a power of control that does not exist! “I can quit anytime.” They are underestimating several things.

2. **The power of habit** - When you are doing anything long enough, you feel compelled to continue. “An act often repeated hardens into a habit, and a habit long continued petrifies into character.” Ex. “I still have to fight because it is so much a part of me.”

F. The demands of sin. (Luke 15:14-16)

1. You will find yourself doing things you never dreamed of. (**John 8:34**)
(Ex. Drugs, fornication ... High becomes hard to keep.)
2. Soon you cannot have the same high, then comes the famine. There is no more fulfillment and satisfaction but cold hard reality. What do you do then?
3. “No man would give to him.”-There are no rewards from Satan, he does not care. Judas found this out. (**Matt 27:1-5**)
4. This is all headed to a point where one becomes unable to escape. (**Eph 4:19; 2 Pt 2:14; 1 Tim 4:2**)

II. The Process and Fruits of Repentance (Luke 15:17-19)

- A. An honest reflection upon one’s life
 1. This is hard to do. Many rationalize, blame others, and loose their conscience.
 2. Can you see your own sin? When was the last time you really repented?
- B. A refection upon the goodness of the Father. (**Rom 2:4**)
 1. Look at your own sins and ingratitude and know God will take you back.
 2. This Godly sorrow will lead to repentance. (**2 Cor 7:10**)
 3. This repentance is not a comparison to others or a selective repentance.

III. The Forgiveness of the Father (Luke 15:20-24)

- A. The father saw him a “great way off”. He then ran to him.
- B. The Lord is waiting and seeking you. (**Jonah 4:10-11; Acts 17:27; Rev 3:20**)
 1. What if your own children left the Lord?
 2. The love of God exceeds anything we would have for our own child. Why did Jesus not come down from the cross? (**Rom 5:6-8**)
 3. Remember what Jesus said the angels do? (**Luke 15:10**)

IV. The Blindness of the Elder Son. (Luke 15:25-32)

- A. Who does the elder son represent? (**Luke 18:9**)
 1. Some of the hardest hearts I have seen has come from those “raised in the church”.
 2. The spirit of the Pharisee is to make one’s own “political end” the focus of their “righteousness”. (**John 5:44**)
- B. This son fought the work of the father.
 1. Everyone has an influence, where do you stand? (**Matt 23:13,15**)
 2. Even in this he thought of himself as serving the father! (**Mt 12:30**)
- C. This son did not have the heart of the father.
 1. He could look at the grace of his father and not be moved. (**1 Cor 15:10**)
 2. Do you rejoice when one is forgiven? (**Acts 11:21-23**) (Ex. Church struggles)

Conclusion: Everyone is in this parable. Where are you?

- A. Do we really see ourselves as being rich from God’s grace? (**1 Cor 1:4-8**)
- B. Are we like the Pharisees with hearts untouched by God’s goodness? (**Rom 2:4**)