

CHRIST JESUS SEEKS-FINDS-REJOICES (LUKE 15)

Luke 15 contains three parables that have three separate things that were lost, of which were then found: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, aka "The Prodigal Son". With the first two parables, they are really speaking with the same premise. Jesus puts the emphasis first on the One who is doing the seeking and the finding. Yet to go along with that, it is also important then to the One who is seeking and finding, to what they have found, and then their reaction afterwards. The one obvious difference of the "Prodigal Son" story to the others, is that the father wasn't necessarily actively seeking for his lost son, yet he was though instantly ready to receive his son who had come home. It has been said that the title of "The Prodigal Son" could have been named "The Forgiving Father" as he didn't ask his son where he had been and what he had been doing. He was just overjoyed that his son came back home. In fact, with all three of the parables, the final reaction of the finder is the same, with great joy and celebration. It is all pointing to and based on God's great love for His creation-us. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (**John 3:16-17**)

Therefore, it is important for us to recognize who is initially doing the seeking and finding, and then who is the one rejoicing, and as we looked at last week some of Jesus' other parables, who is paying the price for what is found? Last week we looked at **Matthew 13** which Jesus began by giving the parable of the sower (being Himself), sowing the seed (being the word) onto the the ground (the world-which is us) and some of the people had ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to receive the Word initially, and some didn't. Some then did ok for a time , after receiving the Word, but then either by tribulation that arises, which is that Greek word "thlipsis" which means "a pressure, a pressing in, being surrounded by that pressure", in other words, when the going gets tough they abandon their faith, or they fall away because of their cares for the world and as Jesus put it, the "deceitfulness of riches" that takes that person away from living according to the Word of God. All three of our parables in **Luke 15** speak of what was once in the possession of someone (which is God) and had become lost. It can be said then, as we know from God's Word, "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." (**Psalms 24:1**) We are God's possession before we even are aware of it. And as **Hebrews 1:3** tells us, Christ Jesus upholds all things "by the word of His power". After the parable of the sower in **Matthew 13**, Jesus gave the parable of the leavened meal and the tares amongst the wheat, which were basically speaking of the same thing, that there is the bad (the leaven [sin] and the tares) amongst the good (the meal [righteousness] and the

wheat), and that at a specific time, known only to God, He will separate the good from the bad. The bad going, as Jesus put it, into the "furnace of fire" and the good, or righteous, "will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear". (Matthew 13:42-43)

That leads us to noting that, as the Apostle Paul quoted the prophet Isaiah, "As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God." (Romans 3:10-11) One may ask, then why did Jesus say, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8) Or why did Jesus say, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [food, clothing] shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:33-34) If one has a compunction, or really it is a conviction by the Holy Spirit, to be righteous or to seek God, that is coming from God first seeking us. Christ Jesus is seeking His lost ones, Christ Jesus is the One sowing the seed of His Word, and He is the One who then works in us the fruit of the Spirit of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) It is in Christ alone that we have, according to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:30, "Wisdom" from God, "Righteousness" from God, "Sanctification" from God, and "Redemption" from God. Once again, through Christ Jesus. We are just responding to what the Apostle John said, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him." (1 John 3:1) "We love Him because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)

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

Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." So He spoke this parable to them, saying: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance."

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In Mark's account of what Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees when they complained to the disciples about Jesus eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners, Jesus replied, "Those who are well

have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to **repentance.**" (Mark 2:17) Once again, that word "repentance" comes from the Greek word "metanoeo". Strong's Exhaustive Concordance says it is to think differently, to have a moral compunction for change. "Meta" means to recognize a need for change and the "noeo" is in heeding to that change which for us is in recognizing that God hates sin as He is perfect in all His Ways (2 Samuel 22:31) and His Works (Deuteronomy 32:4), so then those who are His, those who have believed on Christ Jesus and received Him, and are His children, are called to live according to His Righteousness. We'll see a great example of how that plays out in the parable of "The Prodigal Son". But first:

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

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who **repents.**"

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There's that word repent again. That parable only goes so far in its analogy, of God being the seeker and us being the lost coin as we are not mindless, inanimate objects that just get lost because God knocks us off the parabolic table. It can say what it doesn't say though, in that it doesn't matter how we were lost, but that we are found. We have all sinned against God in one way or another. The litmus test, so to speak, is in what Jesus said was the Great Commandment of God's, to love Him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to also love one another as ourselves. We all fall short of that from time to time. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24) By the grace of God and His love for us He offers His free gift of salvation which is just the beginning in our new lives as a child of God. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10) It is in that last verse that we find "The Prodigal Son" had strayed from what he already had. He wanted to try things out his way which led him out in a field with pigs desiring to eat their food.

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The Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32)

Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living."

[Definition: "Rashly or wastefully extravagant."¹] "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ' And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry. Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for **your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.** ' "

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We are given a choice, just as the younger son did, going his own way and seeking out the pleasures in the world or doing the will of God, and seeking His kingdom and His Righteousness. Like the prodigal son, we can know where our true place is meant to be, but it is up to us to heed to that call for a need for change. "Judas (not Iscariot) said to [Jesus], "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (John 14:22-24) As Jesus also stated, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) That is intended for all those who

1 <https://www.wordnik.com/words/prodigal>

have ears to hear and a heart to receive Christ Jesus and His Word. We should also keep in mind the great price that has been paid for our salvation, for us to be reconciled to God, so that we can be a child of God. Returning to **Matthew 13**, that we looked at last week, after Jesus had plainly explained the parable of the tares and the wheat to His disciples, He gave them two more parables that spoke of a price that was paid. First, was the parable of the field that a man bought with all he had and hid the treasure in that field. We know from the previous parables of the tares and wheat and the sower, the field is the world which God bought at a great price. Same with the pearl of great price. Jesus said a man sold all he had to buy that pearl of great price. While it can be said and has been supposed that Jesus is that pearl of great price that we give our all for, yet once again, who is doing the seeking and finding and purchasing really? As we are told by the Apostle Paul, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For **you were bought at a price**; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20**) How precious to God are we, as we heed His call to repentance, to receive His free gift of salvation, expressing to God that we desire His Righteousness, that we love God, and want to be with Him and Him with us, and to be with His people forever in His eternal kingdom. "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (**Hebrews 12:1-2**)