

LUKE

Part 59: “Lost and Found”

Luke 15:1-10

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Sunday, May 5, 2019 (The Second Sunday of Easter Season)

Scripture Reading

15 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

³ So he told them this parable: ⁴ “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸ “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”¹

Introduction

My five-year-old son Samuel is the middle child.

He is considerate, energetic, fun, and he loves his brothers, but he gets very upset when his brothers take his toys. This is part of what it means to be the middle brother, I guess. Everybody feels like they can take your stuff, and Samuel just isn’t having it anymore. So whenever he has a toy that he really likes, Kate and I have noticed that he has started doing something new. He will hide it so his brothers can’t get them. However, sometimes he hides his favorite toys so well, that he can’t get them either!

Most recently this happened with a toy that Samuel received last Christmas. For months he asked us to give him what he calls the “Thanos Glove” (technically, it is called the Infinity Gauntlet, but in our home, it is called the Thanos Glove). For weeks Samuel played with it as he pretend-battled his brothers. And then one day, the Thanos Glove was gone and nowhere to be found.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 15:1–10.

This caused much weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth in the Ritchie household. But we all knew what happened. Samuel had hidden it so well, that he even didn't know where it was. But one day, the lost Thanos Glove was found. And there was much rejoicing, and he has played with it every day since. He won't let it leave his sight. When he goes to bed at night, some kids sleep with a teddy bear. But Samuel sleeps with his Thanos Glove.

We all know what this feels like, right? The feeling when a lost set of keys or lost phone is found. There is a certain sense of elation that we experience. And that is just with things. How much greater is the joy when we are talking about a person.

When I was a little boy in elementary school, I went with my dad, uncles, and cousins to the Texas vs. OU football game, which happens inside the fairgrounds of the Texas State Fair. Due to an unfortunate series of events, I lost my entire family near the Fletchers Corny Dog stand – and I was terrified. Thousands of people were around me. The noise of the crowd stifled my attempts to shout for my dad. But when I made my way to Big Tex, which was our meeting location, I found my dad, and he found me. And we were all relieved, thankful, and filled with joy.

Today, as we look into the first part of Luke 15, I want us to explore that emotional experience of finding a something that was lost, and how that experience is a picture of the gospel of grace.

As we move through this text, we will look at three big ideas: *1.) The Scandal of Grace, 2.) The Divine Initiative of Grace, and 3.) The Joy Flowing from Grace.*

Exposition

1.) The Scandal of Grace.

- Luke 15 is known for the three parables taught in this chapter, but the context is crucial for understanding these parables. That context is found in the first two verses.

“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them’” (Luke 15:1–2, ESV).

- Tax-collectors were seen as greedy men who betrayed their neighbors to collude with the Roman empire, just because it was an easy way to earn money. Sinners were those in the community who were essentially identified and know by their sin. Then they would have been prostitutes and drunkards. Today they would be ex-convicts and drug addicts.
- Tax collectors and sinners are “drawing near” (ἐγγίζω) to hear Jesus (15:1), and the Pharisees and scribes are flabbergasted that Jesus would let them.
- The thought is that true religious leaders shouldn't be seen around sinners; sinners will pollute their own cleanliness.

- And we should admit, it is a biblical concept that bad company can corrupt good morals (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33). This is true of us. But it is not true of God – God has the reverse effect.²
- Moreover, it's not like the tax collectors and sinners are drawing near to Jesus to get shallow words of encouragement and unqualified affirmation.
- The message Jesus is preaching isn't exactly happy go lucky, live-your-best-life-now type teaching. Here is what Jesus has been recently preaching:

“No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5, ESV).

“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:24, ESV)

“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27, ESV).

- Nevertheless, tax collectors and sinners are drawing near to Jesus, and his truth is setting them free (cf. Jn. 8:32). In other words, the grace Jesus embodies is not cheap grace. It is grace that transforms and demands everything. Remember, Jesus met Matthew, the tax collector at his tax booth (Mt. 9:9). But he did not leave him there. Grace meets us where we are, but it does not leave us where we are.
- But still, the Pharisees and scribes grumble against Jesus.
- Grace scandalizes the religious mind.
- Grace saves us in our sin, but it also confronts us with the uncomfortable truth that we cannot save ourselves through our own performance.
- A self-righteous mindset possesses too low of a view of God's holiness and too high a view of self.
- One way to know that you really understand grace is that you pursue righteousness and nearness to God from a sense of delight, not a duty.
- I can date my wife out of a sense of duty or delight, which one do you think would give her joy? Which motive will give me joy?
- Grace humbles us and makes us grateful and obedient out of love.

2.) The Divine Initiative of Grace.

“So he told them this parable: ‘What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders,

² “The OT warnings not to associate with sinful people were no doubt applied to Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners. Yet Jesus associated with such people to offer them salvation through repentance and faith, not to participate in their sin.” Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 403.

rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:3–7, ESV).

- The parable is about a shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to seek the one sheep who is lost. Such a shepherd would likely leave his flock in the care of one of his helpers.³
- To leave the ninety-nine for the one in a shepherding context was to place oneself at risk and vulnerability. Only the owner of the sheep would make such a risk.
- Likewise, a sheep that was separated from the flock had no hope outside of being rescued. Sheep are helpless creatures, and they are not smart. They get scared very easily, and fear causes them to make decisions that lead them to death. Such a sheep was not only lost (ἀπόλλυμι) but also essentially already destroyed.
- The only hope of a lost sheep is a shepherd who will seek them.
- The initiative belongs to the shepherd.
- Initiative is “the ability to initiate or begin something; the power or opportunity to act before others do.”⁴
- God’s people need a shepherd who will take the initiative to save them.
- In saying this parable, Jesus is not just defending his ministry to tax collectors and sinners. He is also confronting the Pharisees and scribes for being bad shepherds of his flock.
- I (Jesus) am a good shepherd. You (Pharisees and scribes) are bad shepherds.
- This goes along with something God has said centuries before through the prophet Ezekiel:

“The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them” (Ezekiel 34:1–4, ESV).

- Bad shepherds use the sheep for their own sense of significance and comfort. And the religious leaders of Jesus day have been doing just that.

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy

³ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 601.

⁴ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, eds., *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

*burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's **shoulders**, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger" (Matthew 23:2-4, ESV).*

- The Greek word used for "shoulders" (ὤμος) here in Matthew 23 is found only more time in the New Testament, and it is right here in verse 5 of Luke 15!
- Bad shepherds lay heavy burdens on the shoulders of the sheep. Good shepherds lay down their life for the sheep, and pick them up and carry them on their shoulders.
- Who will this good shepherd be? Ezekiel answers this question.

"For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness" (Ezekiel 34:11-12, ESV).

- Jesus is this good shepherd (Jn. 10:14). He is God in human flesh who has come to pursue his lost sheep.
- This is the best news in the world!
- The God of this Bible is big enough to create and govern the universe. He is able to uphold stars and galaxies and black holes by the power of his might but is also a God that is big enough to know and care for the one personally. He is big enough to know you truly.
- The God of the gospel is holy and transcendent and glorious. Yet he in his grace pursues us as a shepherd pursues a lost sheep. He finds us in his grace, he rescues us by his grace, and he uses the same grace that saved us to carry us home.
- The whole of the Christian life is dependent on the grace of a personal God who knows you and pursues you.
- To be a Christian isn't to merely believe doctrines about God. He is not a distant celebrity you follow on social media. To be a Christian is to experience God personally. If you do not yet know him in this way, today is a day to be found by him!

3.) The Joy Flowing From Grace.

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:8-10, ESV).

- The lost coin (δραχμή) was a day's wage in the ancient world.
- Again, like the parable before, in this parable, a search is made for that which is precious and valuable, and it is found. And again there is rejoicing.

- In both parables, Jesus equates the act of being found with the repentance of the sinner. And it is that repentance that provokes rejoicing.
- In other words, that which creates joy is not just sinners being near Jesus or attending his teaching, but rather repentance and life-change.
- The truth is we all need repentance. We need to turn from sin to God. But when this happens, there is joy in heaven.
- I love the way we do baptisms at Redeemer because I think it communicates just a little bit of that heavenly joy that is celebrated when someone repents.
- The invitation of this passage is “rejoice with me” (συγχαίρω) (15:6,9).
- God is not glorified by joyless Christians!
- The invitation to joy is an invitation to reject the pride of self-salvation efforts and to rejoice in a God of redemption; a God who is glorified in broken things made beautiful.
- Grace is really good news! No matter where you are, God can find you and redeem you and give you joy!

Conclusion

- This grace is amazing, but it is not cheap.
- To pursue us and save us, Jesus picked up a cross and laid it on his shoulders.
- We, like the lost coin, were valuable enough to be sought after and searched for.
- Value is determined by the willingness to pay.
- We are valuable because the greatest currency was used to purchase us.
- We are the lost coin and the lost sheep!
- John Newton was a slave trader turned Christian, turned pastor, turned man who disciplined the man who led the abolition movement in England.
- He knew the depths of sin and lost-ness.
- And he knew the power of the grace that found him and saved him.
- He wrote these words:
*“Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
 That saved a wretch like me
 I once was lost, but now am found
 T’was blind but now I see.”*
- Redeemer Christian Church, may we be a people that marvel at the good news of this amazing grace. Grace that scandalizes the self-righteous, that takes the initiative to pursue the lost and is the fountain of our truest joy.

Community Group Discussion Starters

1. Read Luke 15:1-10 and summarize Jesus’s teachings in this passage.

2. The Pharisees and scribes are scandalized to see tax collectors and sinners drawing near to Jesus to hear him teach. Even more, they are scandalized to see Jesus graciously receive them. Why is grace still a scandalous notion?
3. The first parable of this chapter is the parable of the lost sheep. In this parable, the shepherd seeks the lost sheep, finds him, and carries him home on his shoulders. How is this a picture of salvation and sanctification for the Christian?
4. Twice the invitation is given, "Rejoice with me" (v. 6 and 9). How should the gospel lead us to experience joy?

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